COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION:

TEACHING AND ASSESSING ORAL COMMUNICATION

IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA HIGH SCHOOLS

By

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A

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ABSTRACT

Nationwide developments in the area of educational standards and accountability have produced a movement toward competency-based education in which teachers are increasingly tasked with facilitating the competencies within these developing standards. As a result, professionals in the Communication discipline have an opportunity to apply their knowledge of effective communication practices to provide benefits for students and teachers. The first phase of this study examined State and local educational standards in areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. Local and State standards identified as most closely aligned with standards developed by Communication professionals served as the basis for developing a questionnaire used in the study's second phase interviews to determine how local high school teachers operationalized and assessed these competencies in their classroom curricula. Results indicated that while speaking competencies were the most clearly defined and assessed in the classroom, listening and group communication competencies were in need of further clarification.

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This thesis is dedicated to my children, Robert and Sara, who have taught me the true meaning of perseverance, and patience; and to my father in gratitude for his unyielding faith and confidence in me. It is also dedicated to the memory of my mother and "Oma", who taught me what I needed to know about life -- even when I didn't want to know it.

CHAPTER ONE

Review of Literature

Introduction

In recent years, several factors, such as a drop in U.S. academic scores compared to other industrialized nations, as well as a lack of a sufficiently skilled labor force (SCANS Report, 1993), have prompted the Federal government to introduce its Goals 2000 legislation targeted at improving students' basic skills. Schools and teachers have been tasked with implementing classroom activities to facilitate the improvement of what are considered basic academic skills -- reading, writing, math, and even computing. Starting in the year 2002, Alaska schools will implement a series of mandatory academic assessments administered in the third, sixth, and eighth grades, culminating with an exit exam as a requirement for high school graduation. These assessments are a result of efforts to raise academic standards for Alaskan students which were initiated in 1995 when concern for the improvement of academic standards prompted the Alaska State Legislature to pass the Quality Schools Initiative, directing the Department of Education to develop these qualifying examinations as part of a system of accountability and assessment for Alaska's schools. One component of the Initiative seeks to develop a cooperative effort between education received by Alaskan students, with the ultimate goal "to make sure every child learns to read, write, and compute … and meet high standards in reading, writing, and math" (Alaska Department of Education, 1999).

Reading, writing, and mathematics are certainly important fundamental skill areas, but there is concern among some educators about the lack of emphasis on another basic skill -- oral communication competency (Berko, 1994). If reading, writing, and math are considered basic skills, why not oral communication? Language is the principal way humans organize, communicate and reflect upon the world, making it the predominant means through which other subjects are learned. Listening and speaking are the foundations upon which students base all other classroom learning. Careful attention should also be given to the development of these fundamental skills when developing criteria for student academic standards.

Rationale for the Study

Academic accountability is a topic of considerable interest in the United States. How well Janey and Johnnie can read, write, or do anything else after they graduate from high school is of great concern not only to parents and teachers, but also to politicians and potential employers as our youth continue to fall behind the academic skills of students in other industrialized nations. Recognition of the need to better prepare students prompted federal and State legislators to institute guidelines and standards aimed at improving academic competency levels in our nation's schools. Consequently, communication professionals have a valuable opportunity to assist teachers and administrators in guiding the developing communication competencies in a direction more closely aligned with the standards accepted within the discipline.

This study seeks to examine the present state of affairs in regard to teaching and assessing oral communication skills in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District

high schools, with the goal of identifying needs from the perspectives of professionals in the Communication discipline. To accomplish this goal as the researcher and research tool, I must take into account my own pre-existing expectations both as a parent of two children currently attending a Fairbanks North Star Borough School District high school and as a college communication instructor.

As a parent of two high school students, I first became aware and interested in these issues with the development of the Quality Schools Initiative and subsequent anxiety surrounding the high school exit exam. Like many other parents, I share concern over how these standards will affect my children and their academic future and have questions as to whether school curricula adequately prepare students to meet these new standards. Additionally, my past teaching experiences and my current position as an instructor of Small Group Communication courses at the University of Alaska have provided me with insights into student post-secondary skills in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. Each semester, students enter Communication classes having completed high school requirements in these areas, yet lacking the skills necessary for college level assignments. Many critical questions arise from these situations: How do high school curricula effectively prepare students for the communication skills required for college and/or careers? Are the new State standards aligned with the standards and competencies set by Communication professionals? In what ways do teachers interpret, implement, and assess these standards in their classrooms? These questions are among the issues that will be addressed in the current study. Specific interests focus on which State and local standards and competencies are

most closely aligned with professional Communication standards in the areas of public speaking, listening, and group communication. as well as on how teachers operationalize these standards in their classrooms. My prior parent and teacher experiences provided pre-existing expectations that the speaking competencies would be fairly well addressed in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District classroom curricula. Although group activities are encouraged in the classroom, I expected less emphasis to be placed on group communication skills, with the least attention given to listening skills.

Previous research has demonstrated the importance of oral communication skills in many areas. Rubin (1982) suggests that success in personal and social areas depends on successful oral communication. Other research has linked a minimal level of oral communication competency to college success, as determined by higher grade point averages (Rubin and Graham, 1988). Success in the workplace also depends upon competent oral communication skills, in that communication skills are ranked high on the list of desirable managerial qualities sought by businesses (SCANS Report, 1993). Research has consistently connected oral communication training and competency to academic and professional success (Rubin and Graham, 1988; Rubin, Graham, and Mignerey, 1990; Vangelisti and Daly, 1989). However, recent studies have shown that 20% of the nation's 21 to 25 year olds cannot adequately perform basic oral communication skills (Vangelisti and Daly, 1989).

The cornerstone of Alaska's Quality Schools Initiative consists of general statements known as content standards for students in ten academic areas: English/language arts, mathematics, science, geography, government and citizenship,

history, skills for a healthy life, arts, world languages, and technology. The content standards present general targets and tools that focus on student achievement and performance in learning. As of early 2000, performance standards that translate these content standards into more specific expectations of student achievement have been developed in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics (Alaska Department of Education, 1998).

From the perspective of scholars in the discipline of Communication, questions arise as to where standards pertaining to oral communication are located within these content and/or performance standards, as well as regarding what specific skills are being developed in the classroom that address oral communication. Are there activities incorporated in school curricula that help prepare students for successful oral communication experiences? If so, how are these activities being assessed? The purpose of the present study is two-fold. First, the study is designed to determine the similarities and differences among local, State, and national communication standards. This first step has the goal of providing insights into the relationships among these sets of standards concerning oral communication skills and competencies in the specific areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. Secondly, the study is designed to explore the types of classroom activities and assessments high school teachers utilize to facilitate student oral communication learning in speaking, listening, and group communication. Although early and continued development of oral communication skills is important throughout the educational process, the focus of this thesis will be on how Fairbanks North Star

Borough high school teachers incorporate and assess the State oral communication components within the content and performance standards in their classroom activities.

Several conceptual frameworks and assumptions have guided this study and the corresponding choices of methodologies, in particular, the framework of instructional communication research. Instructional communication research is defined by Staton-Spicer (1982) as "the study of the human communication process as it occurs within an instructional environment. It deals with aspects and variables of communication that can or do affect all instructional environments" (p. 35). A central assumption of this study is that the classroom is a communicative environment in which knowledge (and learning) is socially constructed. Daly and Korinek (1980) suggest that " for most children the majority of their 'communicative lives' is spent in the classroom" (p. 516). Therefore classroom oral communication successes and/or failures have important consequences for student learning and achievement (Green & Smith, 1983; McCroskey & Daly, 1976; Rubin, 1982; Rubin & Graham, 1988).

Oral Communication

Oral communication is as essential for humans as breathing. We are surrounded and immersed in interaction as we go about our day to day existence. Oral communication is fundamental to human development both as an individual and as a species. It affects how we think and how we interact with each other and with our environment, and is directly related to the development of other basic skills (Backlund, 1985). Written communication may make our lives easier, but it is oral communication that is essential for those lives to survive and progress. Throughout history, many cultures

have lacked a written language, yet have existed and evolved successfully with only oral communication (Gray, 1982).

How effectively we utilize our oral communication influences our basic social success. It is difficult to imagine a situation in our lives that does not involve some aspects of oral communication. Parents, friends, teachers, and employers all communicate information to us orally. How well we listen and respond will determine our success in these relationships (Vangelisti and Daly, 1989). Persons who do not possess effective oral communication skills may not receive adequate information to become a fully competent participator in their social environment. Galvin and Brommel (1991) have found that a lack of communication competence may lead persons to feel isolated, rejected, or unintelligent; and they may begin to withdraw from subsequent social interactions. Indeed, these researchers concluded that antisocial and violent behavior may be associated with a lack of communication skills. Parkinson and Dobkins (1982) further observed that providing communication training to prison inmates contributed to improved oral communication skills that facilitated rehabilitation components such as social relationships and employment.

Importance of Oral Communication to Education

Additional studies have demonstrated links between communication competence and academic achievement (Rubin, 1982). Researchers have observed that some speech styles seemed to trigger stereotyped expectations of poor quality that proved, in many cases, to be self-fulfilling. Quiet children who were subjected to negative school experiences progressed more slowly, even with normal levels of aptitude, because they

were reluctant to ask for assistance and subsequently did not receive it (McCroskey and Daly, 1976). Outside of the classroom, oral communication competency contributes to successful social adjustment, personal relationships, and professional advancement, and plays a critical role in psychological development and self-fulfillment as well. Professional development also depends upon competent oral communication skills. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., must listen as well as speak effectively to their clients (Hurt and Priess, 1978). Communication competency also ranks high among the managerial skills necessary for the workplace (Rubin and Graham, 1988).

Ironically, Vangelisti and Daly (1989) have noted a persistent lack of oral communication competency in what is today considered the age of communication, where technology provides the means for almost instantaneous access to almost anyone, anywhere in the world. While classroom attention has focused on improving student abilities in various types of communication technology (Alaska Department of Education, 1998), how well are students being prepared for the face-to-face communication that is vital to successful daily existence? How well can they present their opinions and views to other individuals or groups, or listen and analyze others' views and opinions? Rubin and Graham (1988) maintain that "communication ability is intricately linked to success in the future ... and students must have some minimal level of speaking, listening, writing, and interpersonal skills" (p. 16). Oral communication skills can be improved, just like other skills, through classroom instruction.

Communication scholars have identified a number of aspects of oral communication that are basic to satisfactory oral communication competency. Public

speaking, listening, interpersonal, group, critical thinking, conflict management, persuasion, negotiation, and speech anxiety are a few of these oral communication components. The current study examines how oral communication skills in the important areas of speaking, listening, and group communication are addressed within three different sets of educational oral communication competency standards, as well as how these skills are addressed in classroom instruction.

Public Speaking

As humans, we speak every day. We greet people, express opinions, agree and disagree, ask and answer questions; all without a second thought. Of all the communication acts humans perform throughout their lives -- talking, listening, writing, and reading -- talking and listening are the most predominant in professional, personal, social, and political relationships. For every word written, an individual may speak thousands of words during an average day (Vasile & Mintz, 2000). According to communication researcher David A. Good (in press), "Human language and the ways in which we use it lie at the very heart of our social lives" (p. 1). The ability to talk to and with other people effectively is fundamental to the maintenance of social networks and relationships in every aspect of our lives. "Simply put, without our ability to converse with one another, there is no such thing as human society" (p. 1).

Throughout history, public speaking has benefited individuals personally and professionally, in addition to contributing to the advancement of society. Public speakers, famous or not so famous, have produced changes in civilization's knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, and ideas on the role of government and of themselves as citizens. As we

enter the 21st century -- an era described as "an age of rapid change" the art of public speaking is expected to become an even more vital means of communication (Gamble & Gamble, 1998).

Despite the importance of public speaking in our lives, many people dislike -- even fear, making speeches. Studies by R. H. Brushkins and Associates have documented public speaking as the number one fear of Americans, ranking even higher than death (Spectra, 1973). Communication researchers (Daly, Vangelisti, Neel, and Cavanaugh, 1989; Richmond & McCroskey, 1996) note factors of personal inadequacy, low self esteem, fear of the unfamiliar, fear of being judged by others, and fear of being conspicuous or the center of attention as only a few of the numerous reasons behind this pervasive anxiety which manifests either as an ongoing individual characteristic, termed trait apprehension, or as state apprehension, a state of mind experienced by the individual temporarily for a period of time. While trait apprehension afflicts about 20% of Americans, a larger percentage of the U.S. population suffers from the temporary state apprehension associated with public speaking (McCroskey, 1977). Education in public speaking can provide skills to help overcome these difficulties and enable the individual to grow personally, professionally, and socially (Gamble & Gamble, 1998).

Public speaking competence, personal satisfaction, and success go hand in hand. As an individual's public speaking abilities increase, so do their confidence and self-esteem when they begin this self-discovery journey of self-expression. They gain personal satisfaction in feeling they have more control over their lives and environment (Vasile & Mintz, 2000). Additionally, knowing how to research, organize, and present ideas relieves

some of the frustration of trying to get concepts and opinions across to others. Competent speakers feel better about communicating ideas and more confident that others will be accepting of their ideas. Gamble and Gamble note that, "Effective speakers are perceived to be more powerful than ineffective speakers" (1998, p. 6). Hamilton concludes, "If we want people to believe us when we speak, if we want to enhance the positive impressions we make on others, we need to build up our speaker confidence" (1996, p. 48).

Communication scholars (Gamble & Gamble, 1998; Hamilton, 1996; Vasile & Mintz, 2000) also contend that competent public speaking instruction is beneficial to society by providing the skills necessary for individuals to become involved citizens. Democracy depends upon citizen participation, with encouraging each citizen's freedom of speech as an essential ingredient. Therefore, PTA meetings, city councils, neighborhood watches, and political organizations, provide many opportunities for individuals to publicly express their opinions.

Finally, public speaking abilities have repeatedly been noted as crucial for career advancement (Gamble & Gamble, 1998; Hamilton, 1996; Rubin and Graham, 1988; Rubin, Graham, and Mignerey, 1990; Vangelisti and Daly, 1989; Vasile & Mintz 2000). No matter what the job, speaking skills are needed. A 1987 survey by AT&T and Stanford University found the one question asked of people in any career field most predictive of their earning power was "Do you enjoy giving speeches?" Those who responded with an affirmative answer consistently held a higher salary than those who responded negatively. Responses from technical professionals have yielded similar results. An example is evident in a survey of 500 engineers who ranked speaking abilities

over technical skills (Kimel & Monsees, 1979). It is increasingly difficult to imagine a job that does not include some form of public speaking responsibilities. Studies suggest that how far an individual advances in their career may depend on how capable the individual is at "addressing, impressing, and influencing others" (Gamble & Gamble, 1998, p. 6). Richmond and McCroskey conclude, "People who feel comfortable expressing themselves are perceived as more competent, make a better impression during job interviews, and are more likely to be promoted to supervisory positions" (1995, pp. 74-75).

Numerous studies have documented the importance of competent speaking skills to academic as well as everyday life (Backlund, 1985; Bassett, Whittington, & Staton-Spicer, 1978; Curtis, Windsor, & Stephens, 1989; McCroskey & Daly, 1976; Rubin, 1982; Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990). However, students who communicate well in familiar settings may not express themselves effectively in a broader range of situation (McCroskey & Daly, 1976). Confident speakers often become more confident students as they develop the ability to speak up in class, demonstrate content mastery, and convey thoughts and ideas to peers and instructors. Whereas teachers may sometimes feel that students do not need to learn how to talk as they often do too much of it already, competent communication needs cultivation. The unguided learning that occurs outside of the classroom will not create effective, competent communicators in the manner that systematic instruction in oral communication can.

Listening

The word "listen" is derived from two Angelo-Saxon words meaning "hearing" and "to wait in suspense." Listening is therefore more than just "hearing" the message. It is a combination of hearing sound and waiting for psychological involvement with the speaker or source of the message (DeWine, 1994). In the Aristotelian tradition, most of the responsibility for communication has been placed on the speaker, instead of being placed equally upon both speaker and listener (Bowers, 1988). Correspondingly, a good listener lets the speaker know if the message has been understood by engaging in active listening. Active listening is defined as " the ability to pick up, define, and respond accurately to the feelings expressed by the other person. When active listening is employed, speakers perceive that they are being understood" (DeWine, 1994, p. 148). In the American classroom, students generally " give feedback concerning content by rewording, amplifying, and asking questions" (p.19). Good listening skills are therefore critical to academic success, because most classroom instruction is delivered orally. Students with ineffective listening skills will fail to grasp much of the instructional material they receive. Moreover, students who listen poorly are often isolated and left out of the classroom activities (McCroskey & Daly, 1976).

A wide range of research (Robbins, 1989; Rubin and Graham, 1988; Rubin, Graham, and Mignerey, 1990; Sypher, Bostrom, and Seifert, 1989; Vangelisti and Daly, 1989) has demonstrated the importance of competent listening skills in areas outside the classroom. Good listening skills have been clearly identified with good management skills that ranked effective listening highest among skills defined as most important in

becoming a manager (Robbins, 1989). Sypher, Bostrom, and Seibert (1989) found that "listening is related to other communication abilities and to success at work. Better listeners held higher level positions and were promoted more often than those with less-developed listening abilities" (p. 301).

Research indicates that although individuals spend more time each day listening than using any other communication skills, less time is spent developing and refining that skill than any other communication skill. Steil, Burke, & Watson (1983) report that most of an individual's day is spent listening. Their studies reveal that although 16% of the day is spent speaking, 53% of the day is spent listening (p. 3). They conclude that "listening is a communication skill that we rarely receive formal training in; yet, listening is the skill we develop first and use most often. Instead of training, our listening behaviors are developed by watching and listening to others" (p. 5). Of all the oral communication skills, listening is the one taken most for granted. Most students begin school with some speaking and listening skills. Listening abilities are assumed to automatically develop as a function of maturation (DeWine, 1988). To encourage students in their efforts to become competent listeners, it is vitally important that educators provide classroom instruction to identify and improve student listening habits.

Group Communication

In the broadest sense, a group may be defined as collection of individuals. However, researchers have noted that this definition does not differentiate between random assemblies or aggregations of individuals as opposed to those who come together for a purpose (Barker, Wahlers, and Watson, 1995; Goldhaber, 1990). While numerous

definitions for a group have been proposed, none have produced a single and final definition of a group (Cathcart and Samovar, 1981). Rothwell (1998) defines a group as a human communication system composed of " three or more individuals, interacting for the achievement of some common purpose(s), who influence and are influenced by one another" (p. 55).

Rothwell (1998) notes that groups are an inescapable part of life. On any given day, most individuals spend a substantial portion of their daily lives interacting with some sort of group: family, friends, classmates, colleagues at work, etc. All fall into the definition of a group (p. 3). Frey (1994) observed that " the small group is clearly the tie that binds, the nucleus that hold society together" (p. ix). Most of our communication occurs in groups. Throughout our lives groups have a significant impact on our development and behavior, utilizing communication as the basic tool for operation no matter what the group, Communication may be viewed as an important thread that maintains group cohesion, holding it together and influencing its decisions and direction.

Groups have had an important impact upon the workplace as well. In the 1980's, only 5% of U.S. employees were involved in work-related groups. By the year 2000, it has been projected that 50% of U.S. employees will participate in groups at work (Freeman, cited in Rothwell, 1998) Tropman (1988) maintains, "Most of the important decisions that affect your work life are made by groups" (p. 7). In addition to the workplace, the significance of groups may be observed in the classroom. Dodd (1995) notes that, "Usually, we learn in group context, not in isolation. Through the group factors ... individuals shape their world and think, act, and communicate typically according to

social group expectations" (p. 34). Given the persuasiveness of group interaction, it would seem critical for teachers to facilitate skills that promote competent communication to maximize the benefits of group participation for students.

Traditional Assessment of Oral Communication Skills

Although seldom specifically identified, oral communication skills have indirectly always been an important role in the educational process. Integrated across most curricula, oral communication skills have been incorporated into a variety of classroom activities for many years. Teachers utilize a variety of activities that provide instruction associated with oral communication skills when they encourage students to be effective speakers, cooperate with others, improve their social skills, consider others' views, and resolve conflict -- all elements of communication competence, even if they were not identified as such (Moreale and Backlund, 1996).

In the past, formal instruction in oral communication skills has received less recognition and/ or evaluation than more traditional subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics. These latter three subjects appeared prominently on report cards and were measured using well-established, often standardized assessments, whereas oral communication skills were seldom noted or evaluated by comparable processes (Speech Communication Association, 1993). Historically, oral communication skills instruction was integrated across disciplines within the curriculum, and assessment of student skills was predominantly informal and diagnostic in nature. Educators assumed that because students began school with some speaking and listening skills that appeared to develop as the student matured, they did not require formal communication instruction, even though

systematic oral communication instruction has proven essential for students to become effective and competent communicators (Berko, 1994). In recent years, however, there has been an increased awareness at school district, state, and national levels of the importance of oral communication instruction and assessment to student success in school and subsequently, in the workplace (Speech Communication Association, 1994).

In the late 1970's, the Basic Skills legislation set the stage for a consciousness raising within the American educational system. For perhaps the first time in U.S. history, curriculum developers began to think about the overall importance of oral communication. Speaking and listening skills were treated as more than merely a prerequisite to literate behavior. At the same time, there was also an interest in reforming the U.S. educational experience to focus on the role of oral communication as a medium for learning across disciplines (Rubin, 1982). The efforts at raising educators' consciousness were successful. In the early 1980's, teachers in Massachusetts began formal testing of speaking and listening skills. Pennsylvania and Virginia teachers soon followed in response to their own statewide initiatives for classroom-based assessments (Rubin, 1982). More formal assessment of communication skills has been encouraged through the development of national, state, and school district goals or standards that now consider oral communication to be part of a comprehensive language arts program (Chesebro, 1995).

Modes of Assessment

Perone (1998) argues that "assessment plays a powerful role in education. At its best it informs, guides, and supports the growth of students as it provides teachers with

critical directions for their ongoing teaching" (p. 2). If educators are to articulate standards for students and teachers to achieve, then they must devise appropriate methods by which those standards are to be met. Traditionally, assessment has been provided through selected response and short answer tests, quizzes, projects, and class participation, in addition to various types of standardized tests. However, assessment instruments of these types are limited because they focus primarily on student content knowledge rather than process knowledge (Mead, 1982). Recently, a significant number of educators have begun to question the value of such assessments as the end result of education (Johnston, 1992; Moss, 1992; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991). These educators contend that standardized tests cannot adequately describe student growth and achievement in complex tasks. Instead of standardized testing, different/ alternative assessment practices (often performance-based) that attempt to capture the complex process of student understanding are favored (Perone, 1998). One proponent of different/alternative assessment, Wiggins (1998), asserts that " [w]e sacrifice our aims [as educators] and our children's intellectual needs when we test what is easy to test rather than the complex and rich tasks that we value in our classrooms and that are at the heart of our curriculum" (p. 7).

Oral communication has always been performance-based, involving process skills that would benefit from the present movement to the new mode of "authentic" (i.e., used in the "real world") or alternative assessment. The process skills involved in oral communication lend themselves easily to these new modes of alternative assessment since it is more reasonable and more authentic to assess student oral communication

performance than to assess student knowledge about the oral communication process (Camp, 1990).

Although formal assessment of oral communication skills has been encouraged through the enactment of the legislation that requires establishing curriculum goals, and although many states and school districts have articulated these goals in specific curricular standards, few have developed formal measures to identify and assess oral communication Instead, the curricula they have developed have often included only informal measures or suggested assessment activities. Current attempts at oral communication assessment, therefore, could be augmented by adapting certain aspects of alternative assessment (Hay, 1994).

Presently, many states are following the national trend to move away from the more traditional, selected response, short answer, standardized assessment formats toward alternative assessments developed to emphasize performance-based evaluations (Stiggins, 1997). Performance-based assessments of oral communication competency provide more valid evaluations than previously used self-reports in which the students furnish an evaluation of their own competence.

Research Questions

Recent academic reforms have emphasized the need for clearly defined achievement goals for subjects taught to students in the classroom. Teachers are being charged with developing and documenting instruction that supports learning aligned with these goals or standards. While this alignment is being accomplished with many traditional classroom subjects (i.e., reading, writing, and mathematics), it is less easily

accomplished in areas such as oral communication. Despite the increasing awareness of the importance of oral communication skills, little has been done to determine how these crucial skills align with established local, and State standards, how they are being incorporated into a classroom curricula, or how teachers assess these skills in student activities.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first part of the study examines the relationships among the local, Alaska State, and national standards for oral communication competency with specific application to Fairbanks, Alaska. More specifically:

RQ1. What similarities and/or differences exist among the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Ongoing Learner Goals, the Alaska State Content and/or Performance Standards, and the National Communication Association K-12 Standards and Competencies for Oral Communication?

The second part of the study is designed to: (a) determine types of classroom activities teachers utilize to facilitate oral communication skills instruction and (b) explore what criteria and means of assessment teachers use to assess the oral communication skills of speaking, listening, and group communication. Specifically:

RQ 2. How do Fairbanks North Star Borough high school teachers operationalize the State oral communication standards in their classroom curricula?

RQ 3. What criteria and means of assessment do Fairbanks North Star Borough high school teachers use to assess their students' oral communication skills?

While findings from previous research demonstrate the importance of oral communication skills to education (in terms of personal, professional, social, and academic success), few studies address specific ways of contributing to teachers' facilitation of these skills in classroom activities. Although oral communication skills are an acknowledged and integrated part of most curricula, little has been done to provide clear targets for attaining these goals. Standards have articulated what students need to be able to do. Efforts now need to focus on providing teachers with more established guidelines to achieve and assess the goals of these standards. From the Communication discipline's perspective, these are issues of vital importance.

CHAPTER TWO

Design

The purpose of this study is not only to explore the relationships among different sets of standards for oral communication competency, but more importantly, to explore how teachers interpret, operationalize, and assess these oral communication standards in their classroom activities. To address these questions, a compatible research paradigm, methodology, and methods are required that accurately reflect the nature of the investigation.

Paradigm and Methodologies

Kuhn (1970) defines a paradigm as "a constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by members of a given (scientific) community" (p. 175). The beliefs inherent within the chosen paradigm determine the types of questions researchers choose to ask, with resulting consequences for the choice of research methods, data collection, and data analysis (Smith, 1988). There has been a long-standing debate regarding the broader paradigm within which research should be conducted. The debate is centered on whether a quantitative approach typified by experimental methods, or a qualitative, descriptive approach is better (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1990). An experimental design would be the most appropriate approach if the purpose of the study were to determine a causal relationship. On the other hand, a naturalistic, descriptive approach

would be appropriate if the research were attempting to answer "what" or "how" questions that are normative or correlative (Bickman & Rog, 1998).

Patton (1990) argues that researchers should not be limited to one or the other paradigm, but rather should follow a new perspective of "pragmatism" or the "paradigm of choices" (pp. 38-39) in which the researcher is no longer bound to the traditional approaches, but is free to pursue "methodological appropriateness" (Patton, 1990, p. 39) in which sound decisions concerning methods are based on the purpose of the study and the type of questions asked. The purposes of this study are to determine the relationships among three different sets of oral communication standards, as well as how teachers operationalize and assess these standards in the classroom. Comparisons of different standards can be best obtained by using methods that draw out patterns and themes within each set of standards. Likewise, how teachers operationalize and assess these oral communication activities can best be determined by using methods that elicit teacher perspectives on how they construct the meaning of these standards and interpret them in classroom activities and assessment. Quantitative methods such as surveys could be employed to determine the types and frequencies of activities and assessments, but these methods would not provide a detailed picture of teachers' personal perspectives on these standards, on activities they employ to implement classroom instruction pertaining to such standards, and on how teachers assess student skills facilitated by these activities. These specific purposes indicate that naturalistic, descriptive research is the appropriate methodological paradigm for this study.

Naturalistic, descriptive research lacks the fixed, standardized arrangements that are the cornerstone of experimental research designs, but this does not imply that such research has no design. Yin (1994) asserts, "Every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design" (p. 19). Naturalistic, descriptive research employs a less restrictive, more general concept of design that depends upon the congruous integration of its various components to attain a successful conclusion. The five basic components of research -- purpose, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity -- all influence and are influenced by each other. Although each component addresses a different set of research issues, they all affect and are affected by each other to create an interactive design model, working together to promote efficient and effective function (Bickman & Rog, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That is, the focus is on developing a design that maintains a clear sense of the study's purpose, as embodied in the research question. That purpose not only guides the development both of the conceptual framework and of the methods of data gathering, but is also the basis for assessing the validity of the conclusions drawn.

Again, this study is divided into two parts. The first part will compare three different sets of oral communication standards with the aim of identifying State and local standards for instruction in oral communication. The standards so identified will be the basis for developing the interview schedule that will guide the data gathering for the second part of the study, in which local high school teachers will be interviewed regarding modes of instruction in oral communication skills and their assessment of these skills. Consistent with the above description of naturalistic, descriptive research, then, the

purpose and conceptual framework of this study can be seen as central to the formulation of the research questions. Those questions, in turn, drive the choice of specific methods for data gathering and analysis, and form the basis for assessing the validity of the results.

Standards

The first set of standards examined is the National Communication Association's Standards and Competencies for K-12 (Appendix A). These standards consist of a set of twenty competency statements developed by the National Communication Association, not as a curriculum or to dictate what should be taught but to enhance a curriculum by providing direction for teaching communication skills in K-12 education. The twenty competency statements are further divided into three dimensions of knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes, with increasing levels of difficulty. These standards represent the most carefully developed and clearly articulated communication standards for use in educational programs, in that they have been developed by professionals within the Communication discipline. Development of these standards originated in 1996, as part of a collaboration of National Communication Association representatives with other educational groups on the Standards Project for English/language arts. This partnership occurred after previous criticism of the nation's educational system prompted the passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the initiation of the Standards Project, and a growing awareness of the relationship between academic success and communication competency. The Standards Project provides State and local school systems an in-depth, professionally developed standards framework for use in their own academic reform programs.

The standards and competencies identified by any given State or local school district would not be expected to be as comprehensive as the one developed by the National Communication Association. Hence the National Communication Association's Standards and Competencies for K-12 serve as a useful, comprehensive framework for identifying in any given set of State and local school district standards which standards are directly linked to oral communication competency. Again, this study focuses on standards only in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication, excluding standards for reading, writing, and critical thinking which are related, and for which studies similar to this might also be done. Specifically then, the purpose of this study's first part is to compare the Alaska State Content and Performance Standards and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's Ongoing Learner Goals with the National Communication Association's Communication Standards and Competencies for K-12.

The Fairbanks High School Ongoing Learner Goals (Appendix B) are the school district academic student objectives that are currently encouraged and are reinforced within the curriculum, although they are not expected to be mastered at any specific grade level. The Alaska State Content Standards (Appendix C) are general statements, recently adopted by the State Board of Education, for what students should be learning and should be able to do as a result of their education in ten core areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, geography, government and citizenship, history, skills for healthy living, arts, world languages, and technology. The Alaska State Performance Standards (Appendix D) are more specific, measurable expectations of what students should know and be able to do in the areas of reading, writing, and math at four key developmental

ages: 5-7, 8-10, 11-14, and 15-18. They are the basis for the recently implemented Benchmark Examinations in third, sixth, and eighth grades; and for the Alaska High School Qualifying Examination required to receive a high school graduation diploma starting in the year 2002. Currently, the State Board of Education has adopted Performance Standards in the three areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Performance standards in the remaining seven content areas are pending, but not yet adopted by the State Board of Education.

Part one of the study required, as a first step, identifying in the National Communication Association's Competencies and Standards for K-12 those key oral communication competencies related to this study's focus areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. Those standards form the more general conceptual framework for examining oral communication standards. The next step was to examine the State and local school district standards to identify the highest concentrations of standards and competencies related to oral communication, particularly in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. This step focused attention on those subsets of the State and local standards that should be the subject of further analysis. The final step was to compare these subsets of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's Ongoing Learner Goals and the Alaska State Content and Performance Standards with the National Communication Association's Standards. The specific standards found most closely aligned with the National Communication Association's standards were used to develop the teacher interview questions for part two of the study.

Data Collection

Participants

The second part of the study involved interviews with teachers to determine how they operationalize those oral communication components of the State and local standards most closely aligned with the National Communication Association standards in classroom activities in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. Prior to the data collection, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institutional Review Board granted authorization for the study to proceed. Principals from the four Fairbanks North Star Borough School District high schools (Eielson, Lathrop, North Pole, and West Valley) were contacted to explain the purpose and goals of the study and obtain their consent to contact teachers in their schools. Part one of the study indicated that the essential focus would be on English/language arts teachers, hence a list of these faculty members was obtained from each school. A random number table was used to assign a random order in which the teachers were to be contacted. If contact was not achieved, or a teacher declined to participate, the next name on the randomized list was to be contacted until a willing participant was located. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, issues regarding confidentiality were explained, and written consent was obtained (Appendix E) before the interview commenced. Interviews were audiotaped, in addition to notes taken by the researcher.

Teacher Interviews

Interviews were chosen as the best method to assess the operationalization and assessment of instruction in oral communication skills in speaking, listening, and group

communication. Whereas surveys could provide succinct, systematic categories and frequencies that would be quicker to analyze, they would not be able to access the variety of detailed, in-depth information found in teachers' own personal perceptions. This approach permits the researcher to gain information and understanding of a situation through the insights of others. Asking open-ended questions in interviews is the best way to obtain this type of information. In this study, interviews were conducted utilizing the standard, open-ended interview approach suggested by Patton (1990).

Patton (1990) asserts that "we cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things" (p. 278). According to Patton (1990), open-ended interview questions "enable the researcher to understand and capture points of view of other people without pre-determining those points of view"(p. 24). Patton (1990) concludes that:

> Direct quotations are the basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondent's depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking (p. 25).

In particular, part one of the study indicated that the teacher interview guide (Appendix F) should be focused primarily on the Alaska State Content and/or Performance Standards. Questions were developed from specific competencies located

within those standards relating to speaking, listening, and group communication. These questions sought to solicit specific information regarding teachers' perceptions of these oral communication standards, how they incorporated them into classroom activities, and how teachers assessed these specific activities (if they assessed them) along with the criteria they used for these assessments.

The questions were partially structured, yet open-ended enough to allow topic shifts which the interviewer was free to explore or probe further in order to explicate the particular subject. This method allowed the researcher to cover specific topics relevant to the study, while also gathering individual participant perspectives. Each question was developed directly from a competency found within the State standards, and each respondent was asked essentially the same questions. Clarifications and elaborations were incorporated into the interview schedule.

Analysis of the Interview Data

Because naturalistic inquiry is oriented toward exploration and discovery, analysis is inductive in that researchers attempt to make sense of the situation, taking into account their own pre-existing expectations. Inductive analysis originates with specific responses to open-ended questions as the researcher comes to understand the patterns that exist in the empirical world under study. Explanations for what is happening are thus grounded in direct experience rather than being imposed a priori (Patton, 1990).

Inductive analysis occurs in two different ways. When the focus involves comparing different groups, this type of analysis first looks for characteristics that make each group unique. General patterns may be identified, but the initial focus is on

understanding each individual group before these groups are compared. When the focus is on individuals, inductive analysis begins with the personal experiences of those individuals, without pigeonholing or delimiting what those experiences are in advance (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Analysis of the in-depth, personal perspectives of how teachers operationalize and assess these standards in their classroom instruction proceeded in this latter manner using the inductive analysis method that stems directly from the open-ended interview approach described by Patton (1994). The goal of the analysis was to determine what activities teachers construct, utilize, and assess in regard to the three basic areas of oral communication. The analysis involved examining each participant's answers to specific questions for similarities and differences. Findings were then categorized, but individual teacher perspectives were incorporated to provide a clearer picture of their personal thoughts and views about the topics under investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

Analysis

Research Question One

The first research question is concerned with locating which oral communication elements relating to speaking, listening, and group communication identified in the National Communication Association's Standards and Competencies for K-12 are embedded within the new Alaska State Content and/or Performance Standards and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's Ongoing Learner Goals. The district and State standards were not expected to have the depth and scope of the oral communication competencies present in the National Communication Association's Standards. Instead, the national standards, developed by members of the Communication discipline, were used to identify those aspects of both the new State standards and the district standards that are involved or more directly linked to oral communication.

The National Communication Association Standards and Competencies for K-12 were developed by the Communication discipline in response to a growing national awareness of the relationship between student success and competent communication skills. This awareness originated in 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education published findings criticizing the prevailing work of the nation's educators. Consequently, President Bush and state governors met in an Education Summit and commissioned the National Education Goals Panel to establish targets aimed at

educational reform. These six broad targets produced by the Panel became known as Goals 2000, and were one impetus in the subsequent passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act which proposed the development of standards in a number of areas including communication.

The development of standards in the area of English/language arts began in 1992 when members of several education groups initiated the Standards Project for English/Language Arts. By 1996, National Communication Association representatives developed and published Speaking, Listening, and Media Literacy Standards for K-12 Education to assist in meeting the need for inclusion of communication in the English/language arts education standards. These National Communication Standards were developed with two goals in mind: to produce competencies 1) useful to K-12 teachers and 2) grounded in the literature of the communication Discipline. Upon their completion, the standards were distributed to state and local school districts to support the inclusion of communication in their standards reform programs.

While comprehensive in scope and depth, the National Communication Association Standards and Competencies were not designed to be used as a curriculum, but rather to enhance and support school curricula. They were not intended to dictate what should be taught in the classroom, but provide direction for teaching communication skills in K-12 education. As such, they were used in this study to act as a guide for determining related oral communication competencies present in the new Alaska State

Content and/or Performance Standards and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Ongoing Learner Goals.

Although the National Communication Association Standards for K-12 are a broad matrix of competencies in knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes and cover a wide range of communication areas, only the specific competencies relating to speaking, listening, and group communication were selected in order to keep the data gathering and analysis tasks within reasonable bounds. The speaking, listening, and group communication standards and competencies selected from the National Communication Association Standards and Competencies for K-12 are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.

National Communication Association Standards and Competencies for K-12, Speaking, Listening, and Group Communication Standards

SPEAKING

Standard 9. Competent speakers demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the speaking process.
9 competencies total, including specifically:
9-1. describe the components of the speaking process.
9-7. apply criteria to evaluate interpersonal, small group, and public communication.

Standard 10. Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to adapt communication strategies appropriately and effectively according to the needs of the situation and setting.
28 competencies total, including specifically:
10-3. explain the importance of adapting communication to the situation and setting.
10-14. select appropriate and effective supporting material based on topic, audience, occasion, and purpose.
10-24.use credible sources for support.
10-25. modify a message to fit the audience
10-26. use feedback to improve future speeches.

Standard 11. Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to use language that clarifies, persuades, and/or inspires while respecting differences in listeners' backgrounds (race, ethnicity, age, etc.).
12 competencies total, including specifically:
11-2. select language appropriate to the occasion, purpose, audience, and context.
11-3. describe how language clarifies meaning and organization.
11-4. evaluate the effect of articulation, pronunciation, and grammar on an audience.

LISTENING

Standard 13. Competent listeners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the listening process.
31 competencies total, including specifically:
13-1. identify the components of the listening process.
13-15. distinguish the difference between passive and active listening.
13-24. practice active listening.
Standard 14. Competent listeners demonstrate the ability to use appropriate and effective listening skills for a given communication situation and setting.
21 competencies total, including specifically:
14-5. select appropriate and effective listening responses across a variety of communication situations.
14-15. seek understanding of a message by engaging in questioning, perception checking, summarizing, and paraphrasing.
Standard 15. Competent listeners demonstrate the ability to identify and manage barriers to listening.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

Standard 10. Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to adapt communication strategies appropriately and effectively according to the needs of the situation and setting.
28 competencies total, including specifically:
10-5. identify successful interviewing techniques.
10-6. identify strategies for appropriate and effective small group communication.
10-7. identify problem-solving strategies.
10-8. identify group roles.
10-9. identify group norms.
10-19. use communication strategies to achieve major functions of a group.
10-20. demonstrate both task and social communicative behaviors in a small group.
10-21. participate appropriately and effectively in a problem-solving group discussion.

The Alaska State Content Standards include Content Standards in ten areas and Performance Standards in the three areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Examination of the two sets of standards revealed that, although the Performance Standards provide specific examples of what students should be able to do by the time they complete their secondary education, these standards are presently only available for reading, writing, and mathematics and contained no elements related to oral communication. Therefore, the Alaska State Performance Standards were eliminated from further consideration in the study.

The Alaska State Content Standards are general statements about skills a student should obtain as a result of their secondary education in the ten core areas of math, science, geography, English/language arts, government and citizenship, history, skills for a healthy life, arts, world languages, and technology. Examination of standards contained within each of these areas revealed that, although there are oral communication skill elements interspersed in other areas, the majority of speaking, listening, and group communication related elements are located in the English/language arts standards. Therefore, this particular set of standards will be the focus for all subsequent analysis and for comparison with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's English/language arts Ongoing Learner Goals. Using the National Communication Association competencies identified in Table 1 as a guide, the Alaska State Content Standards in English/language arts and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Ongoing Learner Goals were examined for standards directly linked to speaking, listening, and group communication. The specific standards relevant to these areas of oral communication competency are indicated in Table 2. (See Appendix B for full District and Appendix C for full State standards).

Table 2.

Oral Communication Competencies included in Alaska State Content Standards and Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Ongoing Learner Goals for English/Language Arts

SPEAKING

Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts:

A. A student should be able to speak...well for a variety of purposes and audiences.

1. apply elements of effective...speaking; these elements include ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and personal style.

2. in speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity.
3. speak well to inform, to describe, to entertain, to persuade, and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication.
4. when appropriate, use visual techniques to communicate ideas.
5. evaluate the student's own speaking...and that of others, using high standards.

Fairbanks North Star Borough Ongoing Learner Goals:

As speakers and listeners, students will:

-speak and listen appropriately in a variety of situations to a classroom-sized audience.
  -oral presentations
  -performances
-participate in an interview.

LISTENING

Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts:

B. A student should be a competent and thoughtful ... listener ... of literature, technical materials, and a variety of other information.

1. comprehend meaning from ...oral ... information by applying a variety of ... listening ... strategies; these strategies include ... active listening.
2. reflect on, analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral ... information and experiences, including discussions, lectures, art, movies, television, technical materials, and literature.
3. relate what the student hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to other texts and experiences.

Fairbanks North Star Borough Ongoing Learner Goals:

As speakers and listeners, students will:

-speak and listen appropriately in a variety of situations to a classroom-sized audience.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts:

C. A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.

1. When working on a collaborative project,
   a. take responsibility for individual contributions to the project
   b. share ideas and workloads
   c. incorporate individual talents and perspectives
   d. work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience
   e. evaluate the processes and work of self and others

Fairbanks North Star Borough Ongoing Learner Goals:

As speakers and listeners, students will participate in a variety of group discussion formats including collaboration on projects

As evidenced in Table 1, the National Communication Association's Standards and Competencies for K-12 include a greater variety of oral communication competencies as well as higher expectations for skill development compared to either the District Ongoing Learner Goals or the Alaska State Content Standards. Neither of the latter sets of standards were in complete alignment with the National Communication Association's standards, as was expected. However, the District Ongoing Learner Goals were clearly the most limited in scope and depth. Speaking and listening skills were combined in all components of the Ongoing Learner Goals and were identified in more general terms than in the Alaska State Content Standards. District speaking/listening components were also more limited in their range ("speak and listen appropriately in a variety of situations to a classroom-sized audience") than the Alaska State Content Standards ("speak...well for a variety of purposes and audiences"). The Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts represents a more in-depth, focused move toward the standards advocated by professionals in the Communication discipline. As a consequence, the oral communication elements identified in the Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication were used for the development of teacher interview questions used to gather data to address research questions two and three.

Research Questions Two and Three

The second and third research questions are concerned with how high school English/language arts teachers operationalize and assess speaking, listening, and group

communication skills delineated in the Alaska State Content Standards for English/language arts.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District is located in the Tanana Valley in interior Alaska. The secondary schools are composed of a combined junior/senior high school l-- Ben Eielson, and three high schools -- North Pole, Lathrop, and West Valley, as well as various private, parochial, and alternative schools. Examination of school district documents revealed approximate student enrollment in these main four high schools to range from 600 at Ben Eielson, over 1000 at North Pole, 1200 at West Valley, and 1500 at Lathrop. Since the results of the investigation for research question one indicated that, in the Alaska State Standards, the majority of speaking, listening, and group communication competencies to be located in the English/language arts Content Standards, only teachers from this department were selected as participants for the interviews. The English/language arts departments of these schools employ a combined total of 38 to 40 teachers from grades nine through twelve.

After receiving consent from the high school principals to contact teachers at their school for the study, a random list of names was constructed. Teachers from this list were contacted either by telephone or through e-mail to request their participation. Difficulties arose when teachers either were unwilling to participate or failed to respond to repeated requests. A lack of response from one high school resulted in the elimination of the school from the study. Another problem occurred when an interview was unexpectedly interrupted shortly after it began and had to be terminated. Since the interview was never

completed, the incomplete data were not used in the study. On the other hand, one high school expressed a high interest in the study, providing referrals to colleagues who willingly volunteered to be interviewed. These circumstances resulted in seven of the ten participants interviewed coming from one high school.

The teachers were composed of three males and eight females with teaching experience ranging from three to thirty-five years. They were all willing participants who were informed of the study's purpose, and allowed the researcher to interview them at their convenience, either before or after class, or during their preparation periods during the school day. Interview times ranged from 10 minutes to 60 minutes in length. Interviews were audio taped, and used in conjunction with interviewer notes to aid in data analysis. The results are organized in what follows by interview questions.

Interview Questions

Speaking Skills

1. *According to the Alaska Content Standard A for English/Language Arts a student should be able to apply elements of effective speaking including ideas, organization, vocabulary, etc.* Interview question one asked teachers to: Describe activities you use in the classroom that require students to apply these elements of effective speaking (for example, ideas, organization, vocabulary, etc.).

2. *Standard A also states that a student should, in speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity.* Interview question two asked teachers to: Describe classroom activities you use that require students to demonstrate these (as well as other)

presentational skills. How do you assess these speaking skills when evaluating related student activities?

For the purpose of the analysis, interview questions one and two were combined during analysis because teachers responded to them as interconnected in talking about oral communication activities and addressed them simultaneously. Question one was concerned with content and organizational elements while question two focused on the presentational elements of an effective speech. Teacher responses to activities relating both elements of effective speaking were the most extensive of all the responses.

Activities that require public speaking and the subsequent assessment of these speeches are the most clearly defined and structured of the three oral communication areas investigated. All of the teachers interviewed acknowledged the importance of oral communication skills and their instruction in the classroom. This importance was expressed in comments such as, " We feel it is an important skill so we build it in each year so they get comfortable with it." Others noted, " Some are very comfortable [with speaking], then a lot are very nervous. When they first start out they are not as successful, but if they don't take those first steps..."

Teachers explained that oral communication is presently integrated across the school district curriculum, with various types of speeches and speaking activities required at each grade level. Their comments included: " We have in our English curriculum speeches built right in. They have to do so many." " English nine and ten -- we have an integrated approach." " Speech is integrated into the whole curriculum. There aren't any

speech classes." While students at each high school have the opportunity to develop their speaking skills through participation in activities such as debate teams and drama, only one school out of the four has a separate speech class available to students. Most teachers appeared satisfied with this arrangement. However, a few (20%) indicated they would like to see a separate speech class of some type made available to students. " I've almost wished for years that they had a separate speech class. It's integrated, but not as strongly as I would like to see It." Another commented, " I would love to see a toastmaster club sort of thing."

All of the teachers interviewed (100%) reported they use various types of speaking activities on several occasions during the semester that require students to demonstrate organizational and presentational skills in public speaking. These speaking events encompass a broad range of activities that include formal oral reports, oral presentations, impromptu opinion speeches, class discussions, memorization of lines and poetry, research reports and presentations, formal debates, broadcasts, and performances. Some teachers described these different activities: " Approximately two or three times a year, maybe more, they have to do a formal report and present it." Another teacher's response was: " I don't do formal reports. They do impromptu opinion speeches." Finally, one teacher summed up the responses with the comment " I try to do a lot of different kinds of activities for the kids. They do group work and individual work and oral work and written work for all the usual reasons. But it actually does work. I didn't always used to do that."

But teaching and assessing oral communication skills effectively in the classroom provides a challenge for most of the teachers who were interviewed. Criteria for each assignment are developed and established in advance so students have a clear understanding of what is expected from them. Comments included, "You try to teach them good techniques." " Almost all of my assignments have a certain specific set of criteria that they have to meet because I like them to know how they are going to be graded -- not always, but almost always." Others noted, "All of the things they do orally they are working from notes -- preparation -- because for the most part swapping ignorance isn't altogether that interesting."

But encouraging student participation was seen as a concern. " I want them to talk," expressed one teacher's frustration at student lack of participation. Another teacher confirmed: "I try having discussions. It's really pretty hard with freshmen. They are really not ready for what I call discussion until April."

Some teachers reported incorporating oral communication components into very creative activities to increase student interest. One teacher revealed, "For the final exam I always have an oral section on the final. They choose to be a character and for 40 minutes they are that character. It's great. They love it. They really get to know if they have the text." Other teachers admitted that oral communication is an area in which they do not have a lot of background, are not that comfortable with, and as a result, require only the minimum amount of work from their students. Another teacher acknowledged, " Quite honestly, I don't do a lot of it. It's probably my big weakness."

Most of the teachers (90%) confirmed they experience some degree of resistance and reluctance from students when it comes to speaking. Teacher comments included: " I get a lot of resistance from students giving speeches. A lot are sick that day." "It's a real fight to get them to do it." One reason for this reticence was expressed by a teacher who noted that it is difficult to "get them used to speaking in front of one another because they are very conscious of making mistakes in front of others."

The impact of student attitudes carries over into how teachers assess the speaking activities of students in the class. Aware of student aversion to public speaking, 30% of the teachers reported utilizing alternative tactics designed to accommodate the students' feelings of resistance. For example, a teacher reported, "I give extra points to whoever will be the group speaker. I find that if I don't give extra points for being a speaker though they are very hesitant to speak." Others confirmed, "I usually never give an F because if they try, it is important to me. For trying, I like to give some credit, so I would never give an F." One teacher even acknowledged, " I give exceptions if they come after class with a witness or two. I let them give it [the speech] then."

The teachers' assessment of these various speaking activities depends primarily on the goal set by the teacher. They said, " Some are assessed and some are not." " They don't get points for everything." Some are informal and some are formal activities that require assessment. Each teacher interviewed (100%) utilized some form of a scoring guide or rubric to aid in assessing student skills in formal presentations to the class. These rubrics varied from very rudimentary to quite detailed, depending on the assignment

requirements. Although these guides varied in depth and scope, most included organizational elements such as content, structure, purpose; and presentational skills that include rate, volume, posture, and unnecessary vocalizations. One teacher stated, " I have a rubric I've made up. It grades them on stance, voice, and articulation. I even break it down to speed. Did they talk too fast or too slow. You know, pretty obvious things. How well do they recall it? Does it seem obvious that they practiced? Do they just get up there and fly off the cuff? Do they take notes up?" Another noted, "I have a rubric that I just kind of check things off and make notes while they talk." Others confirmed, "I do have a rubric where I grade on eye contact, poise, and that sort of thing" and " The rubric checks content, voice, style, organization, and eye contact."

While all of the teachers interviewed had a positive view toward utilizing some form of rubric when assessing student speaking, a wide variation was evident in the rubrics described in the interviews. Several teachers (40%) related that they adapted and/or shared any rubrics they came upon that looked useful for these types of activities. One teacher expressed their concerns: "I probably don't have a very good one in terms of spelling out things like posture and diction, participation, relevance to what's said, investment, etc." There was interest expressed in obtaining more appropriate forms of rubrics. "The rubrics really saved our lives. I'm a big believer. Although it would be helpful to have some more standardized."

The responses to interview questions one and two confirmed that while teachers are aware of the importance of acquiring competent speaking skills and do integrate them

into their classroom activities (as mandated by the school district), it remains a sometimes difficult challenge due to student resistance. Classroom speaking activities take many forms ranging from informal and unassessed to formal with specific assessment. When the formal activities are assessed, teachers utilize some form of scoring guide that incorporates some elements of both organizational and presentational portions of speaking. Although both organizational and presentational skills are evaluated in classroom presentations, teachers did not make clear distinctions between them in the interviews. Interview questions one and two were combined because teachers often included descriptions of the presentational skills in question two while discussing the organizational skills in question one. Many teachers did not place an emphasis on the separate types, viewing them as parts of an overall collection of speaking skills.

3. Standard A states a student should speak well to: a. inform, describe, and explain, b. entertain, c. persuade and orally defend a position, and d. clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication. Interview Question three asked: Which two of these four purposes for speaking do you consider most important for inclusion in classroom activities? In what type of activities do you incorporate these formats? Describe how you assess the two purposes you consider most important.

This question addresses which formats (inform, describe, explain; entertain; persuade) teachers consider most important for classroom speaking activities. Almost all (90%) of teachers grouped informing, describing, and explaining as similar formats and persuasion and oral defense of a position as similar, seeing them as the most often used

formats in classroom speaking activities. Furthermore, teachers separated these two general formats in classroom use by degree of difficulty, which was also connected to grade level. Several teachers' comments illustrate this division: "Information speeches are the easiest. Persuading and defending a position is the most difficult. The hardest is to persuade ... defend a position and support it with good ideas. That's what we are trying to do in upper levels. We work on that more." Other comments included," I imagine the 9th grade has to start at a basic level -- giving information in a logical way," and " First and second level are basic communication levels." One teacher confided, " I don't get into debate as much as I should. They have such glaring weaknesses in writing and reading that I hit on those harder because they are fundamental. Sophomores I don't spend that much time on it." While these two formats (informing, describing, explaining, and persuading and orally defending a position) were the most often identified for use in classroom speaking activities, one teacher considered all the formats to be equally important, stating: " I think they are all important. It really depends on what the subject or the audience is. In English 9, we have a demonstration speech. In English 10, I'm going to have an actual debate. Everyone will have to speak."

Interestingly, a few teachers (30%) asserted that entertaining was an important and integral part of the student speaking activities. One teacher contended, " I think humor is a powerful force and, used properly, it is very persuasive." Another teacher observed that " a student can get up and give a good report in terms of information, but if they can't keep the audience's attention, it does no good." Other comments included, "Some can

give very good speeches, but they bore their peers to death. It's not entertaining or holds their attention."

The types of classroom activities in which these various speaking formats were used included many of the types mentioned in interview questions one and two. Informing, describing, and explaining were utilized in reports, presentations, demonstration speeches, some performances, and memorizations. Persuading and defending a position was most often cited in debates and opinion speeches, although broadcasts and some performances were also considered in this category. Assessments were accomplished by using the same basic speech rubric mentioned for questions one and two, or a modification thereof.

Responses to question three revealed that informing, describing, and explaining and persuading and defending a position were the two general formats seen as most important and most often used in classroom speaking activities. Informing, describing, and explaining were considered the easiest to master and therefore, was the format emphasized during initial speaking instruction in the lower high school grade levels. As students developed their basic speaking skills, teachers in the upper grade levels then turned to the more difficult format of persuading and defending a position. This response was consistent with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District curriculum guidelines. Teacher responses concerning entertaining as a speech format revealed that teachers do not interpret what is meant by an entertaining speech in the same sense as

professionals in the Communication discipline. This is a misunderstanding that needs clarification, as noted in chapter four.

4. Alaska State Content Standards A and D both address the fact that a student should, when appropriate, use effective visual techniques to communicate. Interview question four asked: In what ways do you encourage students to effectively and appropriately use visual techniques in their class activities? How are effective visual techniques assessed in class activities?

Interview question four addressed effective and appropriate use of visual techniques. All (100%) of the teachers interviewed reported that they encourage (and often require) students to include visual aids in classroom oral communication activities. These activities most often took the form of presentations, reports, projects, speeches, skits, and other performances. Visual aids were considered by the teachers to be useful tools for enhancing an activity's meaning and effectiveness for the audience. Several teachers noted how they encourage this use: "I always make them do a visual of some sort. That can be a video, or a poster, or a chart, or a drawing. Some sort of visual for the research they have done." Others added, "They make a poster that talks about a certain character development. They may read a short story of their own and make a poster." Several teachers (30%) indicated they suggest the use of many forms of support material. These could include audio as well as visuals. Any type of aid is acceptable that can demonstrate to the audience and teacher that the student can relate it to their project. Examples include: "I tell them they can include music or record a poem or do a video.

Whatever will be effective for their topic." "They do little reviews. I tell them its important instead of just telling us to bring something to involve the audience." and " ... [the visual aid] involves some props or costumes or something that indicates they didn't think about it at lunch time for the first time."

In general, these visual aids are assessed on an informal basis as to their overall effectiveness in relation to the student's topic. None of the teachers interviewed had a structured scoring guide or rubric that they used to assess the visual techniques although most (90%) had some basic criteria on which they provided advance instruction to students, and on which the teachers evaluated the visual. Teachers' approaches to instruction and assessment of visual techniques were noted in the following comments: " I spend 15 or 20 minutes talking about what makes a good visual," "The most important is it communicates their knowledge and reflects their knowledge, which is two separate things." Other comments included, "I assess on three things: appropriateness of what they are trying to teach -- do they key in on main ideas?, appeal -- is it interesting?, and did it help the presentation?" " For me to look at a poster -- it reflects a good knowledge of the character. Their ability to explain their poster to the rest of the class goes beyond just reflecting it -- goes into communicating and reflecting their knowledge."

One teacher indicated the following reasons for not emphasizing or assessing visual techniques in their classrooms:

> I haven't yet. They will have things they find for their research paper -- charts or pictures. I tell them they can come up with some sort of visual

aid. They can even put memorized lines on tape. We have such a diverse population -- some kids have no running water while others have every toy in the world. It really doesn't seem fair. They can even have a piece of cardboard with writing. I don't grade them. Ten percent of their overall grade is from presentation, but the papers get more credence.

Teacher responses to interview questions concerning visual techniques revealed that although the majority of teachers provide some encouragement and instruction to students in effective and appropriate visual techniques, most have no structured rubrics from which they obtain a standardized assessment of these techniques. Responses also indicated that there is some need to provide teachers with additional information on incorporating visual and other types of support material in student classroom presentations.

5. Alaska Content Standard A also states that a student should evaluate his/her own speaking... and that of others using high standards. Interview question five asked: In the classroom, how do students evaluate their own speaking? How do they evaluate the speaking of others? What criteria do you use to assess these student evaluations of their own speaking? Of others?

The issue of student evaluation of their own and others speaking met with mixed responses. Most (80%) teachers responded that students are able to evaluate their own speaking through their personal reflections as well as through the responses from their peers. No rubrics were used for assessment of student self-evaluations as teachers

considered this a type of private, personal growth for each individual and had not contemplated a formal assessment. Some responses to student self-evaluation were reflected in the comments: "Most speakers evaluate themselves right away, 'I blew that,' and sometimes in the middle of their speech, ' Oh, I forgot. 'I think they are very aware -- have a good perception from the beginning. They know the system. They know who's a good speaker and who's not."

In regard to student evaluation of the speaking of others, a number of the teachers (60%) indicated positive results with techniques such as closely monitored use of "golden lines" in which students offer constructive criticism of other student speeches. Care is taken that students understand the comments must be related to the speech topic. "They also have to fill out a golden line feedback and the kids [speakers] get a grade sheet with the golden lines. They are good about it. I've got to check them to make sure they don't put strange comments like 'nice sweater'." Others described how they employ student evaluations: "I often do test some. They have a little rubric and look for some key things -- is the speaker entertaining? Interesting? Was something learned? What grade should they get? What could be done to improve it? It helps them listen better." Other methods included: " They have a grade sheet and I have a grade sheet, and we grade the speaker on content, visual delivery. It keeps them busy grading this person." Teachers who utilized these techniques considered the students fairly honest about their assessments of others " especially if you ask them to put one or two good things and what could be improved." The teachers acknowledged they monitor student comments to make sure they are

appropriate and stay on task. This was evident in responses such as: " I look at the grade they give to see if it matches the comments -- to make sure they are grading what the speaker says, not the person." Most of the teachers agreed that," the rubrics are helpful for students and teachers."

Other teachers (20%) were equally against using student evaluations due to the effects of "peer pressure" to not present an accurate (and potentially harmful) representation of the student's abilities. These attitudes were expressed in the comments: "Peer pressure is a huge deal. I do have an assessment sheet [for two activities]. They give it a plus, or minus, or neutral and whether it was effective or ineffective. I could certainly add another element in them -- is the speaker a credible speaker with polish and veracity and more. But that's not my goal for that part of the assignment." Another comment concurred, "No. I don't do peer evaluations for several reasons. There is a lot of popularity involved. Kids can be pretty heartless and cruel."

Responses from teacher in the area of student evaluation of self and others speaking produced some varied and interesting results. While the majority of the teachers acknowledged students are very aware of their own speaking abilities, none formally assessed this particular area, relying instead, on their personal observations. Roughly, half of the teachers did provide formal rubrics for students' assessment of others' speaking, although this required monitoring to assure the feedback reflected the actual speaking rather than personal opinions of the student. A small percentage of the teachers did not

utilize peer evaluations or feedback in classroom activities due to their concerns about student accuracy and appropriateness, and potentially harmful effect upon the speaker.

Listening Skills

6. The Alaska State Content Standard B states that a student should comprehend meaning from ... oral information ... by applying a variety of listening strategies ... including active listening. Interview question six asked: How do students in your classroom demonstrate active listening strategies? How are these active listening strategies assessed in class activities?

Interview question six entails strategies teachers employ in the classroom that encourage students to become involved in active listening. Formal listening activities were the least often identified of all activities covered in the interview. Listening was identified as an area that has proven to be problematic for teachers in terms of teaching and assessment. These observations were best summarized in the comment: "Listening is probably the worst thing in the whole world. We were just talking about that at lunch. It's amazing. We always do review sheets and test the next day. Yet when we have the test some one will always say 'Are we having a test? I didn't know....'" Other teachers added similar opinions: "Some are actually talking when they should be listening." " They can't listen to each other. They talk over each other. They talk over me." "Part of speaking is listening. and they're not so good at it. They like to talk while someone else is talking. If they don't get points taken off, they won't listen."

All the teachers interviewed (100%) described some type of classroom activity they employed to achieve active listening from their students. These classroom events varied from the simple activities of reading to students, assigning points, different seating arrangements, or giving instructions orally to more complex, explicit, student-oriented events. The simpler activities were illustrated by such comments as: "Listening -- I don't. I've given oral notes." "I try to give most of my instructions orally for that reason ... so they have to be more aware. I have to remind them that much of what they learn comes from listening." Other techniques included: " I do a lot of reading to these kids ... maybe 10 pages at a time, just to allow them to hear what good articulation is...."

A small number (20%) of teachers stressed the use of teaching in a configuration other than rows of desks as important for focusing student listening and subsequently, discussion skills. This was illustrated by the following responses: " I teach in a circle. I haven't taught in rows in 35 years because I don't understand how you can have a conversation with the back of someone's head. I've never understood that." "Instead of sitting around the room, I have them sit in a tight semi-circle in front of the class and that helps."

Partner discussions, fishbowl exercises, unexpected and unusual class events were a few of the specific activities teachers (50%) employed to active listening from their students. A teacher described the activities they used: "One thing I do to help them focus their work ... surprise event ... because it is completely surprising, they are keyed in big time. Their writing is a lot more vibrant." Another added: " I set up little partnership

things -- you speak with somebody and one person has to be a complete listener and the other person has to speak for a certain amount of time. Some of it worked and some didn't, depending on how thoughtful the [student] was. Two days later, another kid said 'When are we going to do another one of those things where one kid listens and one kid talks?' It was a big experiment." Others reported: " I do a fishbowl where a part of the speaking is the listening and they're not so good at that. They like to talk while someone else is talking. It gives them a little break. So I have to focus on the points. They don't get their points for the day if they are talking." Another teacher concurred: "I also do a fishbowl. Half the class is in a small circle and half the class is behind them, behind a partner and their job is to take notes on what the partner is saying. I have a recap of discussion of what they said. Kids in the inner circle really like it because they hear their words from somebody." "They get a certain amount of points for speaking and they lose these points if they aren't listening. They lose points if they can't listen to the other kids."

Although the variety of activities employed by the teachers helped students to focus and concentrate on the comments of others, few teachers had scoring guides or other formal means of assessing these activities. Most were informally evaluated by the teacher based on how accurately they perceived the student retained the events or information. Teacher comments on this type of assessment included: "I don't. I don't really assess listening but I think it affects how they do on their written work. I can't think of anything, but it certainly comes through on their grades." Others teachers agreed: "

[The] oral part of language is so very important, " but many also confided: "I don't assess how well they listen to another. Maybe I should. I never though about it before."

Engaging students in active listening is an ongoing challenge evident by the responses of the English/language arts teachers interviewed. These teachers described numerous methods in which they make efforts to achieve this goal, meeting with varying degrees of success. No formal assessment or rubric was used by any of the teachers. Instead, if there is any assessment, they rely upon personal observations and indirect methods such as test grades and work completion.

7. Standard B also states that a student should reflect on, analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral information and experiences, including: a. discussions, b. lectures, c. literature, d. movies, e. TV, f. art, and g. technical materials. Interview question seven asked: Which two of these seven formats do you consider most important in your classroom for student use in reflecting on, analyzing, or evaluating oral information? How are these two formats assessed?

Interview question seven requested teachers to discuss two of seven formats (discussions, lectures, art, movies, TV, technical materials, and literature) they considered important for students to reflect, analyze, and evaluate the information they obtained. Since the participants were English/language arts teachers, discussions and literature (especially discussions about literature) were mentioned most frequently. Discussion, either as a class or in a group, was selected by all the teachers as most important and desirable format to use when facilitating student learning in the classroom. Discussion

was described by teachers as the ideal format in which to present ideas and information to students, and the most effective, when successful. Getting students to participate in discussion was noted as the most significant problem. Several (70%) of the teachers acknowledged lectures were a necessary, although less effective and less desirable format used in the classroom. All of the other formats, except technical materials, were mentioned by at least one of the teachers. Technical materials were used infrequently, if at all, in the English/language arts classes. The following statements reflect the teachers' opinions: "The group discussion we do [is] a seminar. The kids sit in the middle -- kind of a fishbowl experience. They are asked some kind of provocative questions I like to think ... and they get pretty good at that." Some teachers preferred: "Lots of class discussions where they actually discuss." Others noted: " Not so much technical material in an English class. We do all of those." A few suggested: "The point about group discussion is to really give them something to talk about," while many teachers agreed: "There has to be some lecture but we try to do discussion. So many times kids say, 'Just give me the information.' But it makes for a better person."

The quality and effectiveness of these discussions appear to be dependent upon the grade and/or academic level of the students. Lower grade levels and students who are poorly vested in their education present a more formidable task for teachers to facilitate satisfactory discussions. This was evident in these responses: "These kids [less vested students] need a lot of priming because they are not accustomed just to talk about ideas and not accustomed to hearing that. They don't even have a vocabulary for it." Some

mused: "I imagine 9th grade has to start at a very basic level so they can learn to give information in a logical way," while others stated: "I try having discussions. It's really pretty hard with freshmen. They are really not ready for what I call discussion until April," and other teachers commented: "The class makes a big difference... 11th graders were a little bit more mature and they participated." Most agreed: "There is always a lot of informal discussion, especially at the senior level. Sophomores I don't spend so much time." Teachers agreed that they assess these types of formats informally and largely based on feedback from class discussions and teacher perceptions of student understanding of the material. Formal assessments included tests, writings, and class discussions.

Discussions, lectures, literature, videos, art, and TV are all formats used by teachers in the classroom. Technical materials are used infrequently, if at all. Discussion was the classroom format preferred by teachers. Grade and maturity level of the student were issues that teachers considered important with regard to the type and quality of discussion they were able to obtain from their students.

8. Standard B also states a student should relate what the student hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to others texts and experiences. Interview question eight asked: In what ways do students relate what they hear in your classroom to practical purposes in their lives, the world, and other experiences? How do you assess the activities in which students make these connections?

Interview question eight seeks to understand how students relate what they hear in class to their own life and to other texts, experiences, and the world. Teacher responses to this question were unanimous in their expectation that everything that they do in class is aimed at ultimately allowing students to make these connections from what they hear and learn in the classroom to their own lives and their world. Teachers see this as extremely important even when students are sometimes resistant and often reluctant to acknowledge how their classroom understanding relates to their world. One teacher reported: "Every year I get some great things from the kids. They'll say things like 'Romeo was a Mac Daddy.' I had to go find out what that meant. It's a guy who hits on women or manipulates people for his own purposes. The same student said of Henry IV, ' Hal is macking the people,' It was great insight and he's absolutely right." "The students gain new understanding ' Shakespeare is the Man,' and builds their critical self esteem which I feel you get when you do something really hard that people value." Other teachers added their own insights: "Thoughtful, open-ended questions like we use in To Kill a Mockingbird ... What do you think Harper Lee is trying to say about prejudice and do you think times have changed? Have you ever experienced prejudice?"

Another agreed: " I think that's the key -- absolutely the key to make things come alive for these guys. And it's a struggle. The discussions have to be real and frequent." One teacher explained: "To me that's the purpose of reading literature. It might be something you never expect to happen to you ... you have to form an opinion ... so you can more

readily deal with it," while another noted: " I think we as teachers encourage them to do that, but sometimes they do and just say, 'That was a stupid book.'"

Assessment of how students make these connections from the classroom to real life may take on many forms. Teachers identified formal assessments as the type of answers on tests or how students reflect their opinions in their work. Most often, this assessment is done informally, with no set rubric. As one teacher noted: "So many times there is no right or wrong answer. On a written test I may give an opinion question where they know there is no right answer."

Connecting what students hear in the classroom to their own lives and the surrounding world was recognized by the majority of teachers interviewed as the ultimate goal in English/language arts education. All of the instruction in the classroom work is aimed at developing students' abilities to make those connections. Although these connections are often acknowledged by most teachers as difficult to achieve, most teachers agreed the rewards were worth the effort when accomplished.

Group Communication Skills

9. Alaska State Content Standard C states, when working on a collaborative project, a student should: a. take responsibility for individual contributions to the project, b. share ideas and workloads, c. incorporate individual talents and perspectives, d. work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience, and e. evaluate the processes and work of self and others. Interview question nine asked: What

type of collaborative projects do you require in your class? How are these projects assessed?

Like interview questions one and two, questions ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fourteen were so interconnected that it was difficult to separate each individual element in the teachers' response. Therefore, the five questions were treated as different parts of the overall question concerning group communication activities. Interview question ten asked: In what ways do you perceive students take responsibility for their individual contributions in group projects? How do you assess this aspect of the group project? Interview question eleven asked: How do you perceive students share ideas and workloads when working on a group project? How do you assess this aspect? Interview question twelve asked: In what ways do you perceive students incorporate their talents and perspectives when working collaboratively? How do you assess this aspect? Interview question thirteen asked: When working collaboratively, how well do you perceive students work with others as active participants? As responsive audiences? How do you assess these aspects of group work? Interview question fourteen asked: In what ways do students evaluate their own processes and work? How do they evaluate others? Describe ways in which you assess their evaluations of self and others?

When talking about collaborative classroom projects, teachers considered the different elements addressed in questions ten through fourteen as parts of the overall concern about group work, and as such, incorporated many of them while discussing group work in general. Fatigue may also have contributed to the lack of separation of the

responses, as well as their brevity since they often followed lengthy general discussions about group work and were near the end of the interview. Therefore, the responses to questions ten through fourteen were considered as a group following the discussion of question nine.

Various types of collaborative classroom projects were identified in research question nine. Group presentations, group discussions, group tests, and performances such as skits and broadcasts were a few of the activities used by teachers that required their students to work together in a collaborative situation. The amount of group work incorporated into the classroom curriculum varied greatly with each teacher. While the majority of teachers (90%) cited the use of some type of collaborative work in their class (One teacher indicated they already employ a large number of group activities in their classroom instruction and 80% were beginning to incorporate more group activities and presentations in their teaching strategies), another teacher acknowledged little use of group activities and projects in the classroom. The teachers who did attempt to use cooperative projects confirmed that students are not usually favorable toward the process and that development of these skills takes a substantial amount of time and planning. Yet these were worth the initial effort. Teachers' thoughts on this subject are reflected in the following comments: "Some people like group work. Some people hate group work for different reasons. I get lots of complaints. I'm well aware that it's disliked by all." Others expressed optimism: " I feel comfortable enough at this point in the semester. They know

how to function in groups. They know how to do this job. And sometimes they're useful and productive."

Teachers who employ collaborative activities in their class work acknowledged that the success of group activities was dependent upon well-structured organization and assignment of specific tasks to each individual member. This philosophy was evident in the comments: "Yes, the success of it really depends on how structured it is when you set it up. If it's really well laid out and defined so that every person knows and they don't have any room to guess, it really makes a difference," and "They need to know exactly what task is enough task for each member." Others agreed: " With groups I don't really think of it as speaking activities, but they are clearly speaking activities. You break them into groups of four or five and you give them a common task and you assign a recorder, a writer, and a speaker, and a presenter and always ask if anyone disagrees or has more to add to the speaker. So they get to understand the different roles."

Teachers noted that they were often reluctant to assign one total grade for the entire group, preferring to grade each member individually. The reasons most often cited for this reluctance were concerns over the inequity of this type of grade assignment to students who do most of the work. They did not want to penalize the diligent students or reward those who do not pull their own weight. Other teachers divulged a lack of understanding of how the group processes work and how to assess it. Even teachers who have presently converted to the use of more group-oriented activities acknowledged their

difficulty in transitioning to these group situations because of similar concerns. These concerns were apparent in the following account:

> I had a hard time giving in to the whole idea of group work because we've had our own kids who have gone to the elementary schools with all this group stuff and they've been in a group when two of the kids won't do their part. Our kids have to pick up the slack and it's just not fair, I don't think. So when I finally figured out how to do groups, I had separate tasks for each one. So if anyone person doesn't do his task, it doesn't affect the grade of the other people. They all present their own little section.

Teachers avoided the real difficulties encountered when dealing with group situations by breaking down the group work into separate, individual tasks. However, teachers who avoided use of group activities also acknowledged they should and would like to incorporate these activities into their classes, welcoming any guidelines and suggestions for specific activities. The same teachers cited time and the necessity of concentrating on other basic skills as additional reasons for the lack of focus on the collaborative elements of group work. A teacher confided: " I do very little group speaking. I've never understood what it means to be honest. Some teachers in the department are very good." Another added: " I don't think my students feel comfortable with it." One teacher summed up their concerns:

> Group process is a tricky thing. It's almost always those who are best at it who deliver. That's something I probably have to work harder at...is

to get those people who are more shy and reticent to speak up. I don't do a very good job at that. Frankly, I can see that it's something to spend more time on.

Assessment of group assignments was achieved by the majority (90%) of teachers through individual grading of each member. Only one teacher described activities such as skits or group tests in which the grade was a reflection of the group as a whole. Teachers preferred to organize the group activity with distinct tasks for each mender and grade according to the individual's performance. The following comments demonstrate the teachers' opinions: "When they present each is assessed individually on what the task was -- not a group grade. I do not give many group grades," and " I do a lot of [individual] performance assessment."

Interview questions ten through fourteen reflected many of the specific concerns teachers expressed in their responses on group work in the classroom. Concern over each student taking responsibility for their individual contributions to the group project was disclosed in the teachers' previous responses on how they constructed and assessed group projects to emphasize each individual part rather than the group as a whole. The teachers' approaches to how students' shared ideas and workloads in group situations were reflected in the following comments: " Many students are willing to help other. Students who understand will take time to help others and encourage them." Other teachers commented" "Sharing. That's a tricky one. There is always a percentage of students who

won't put out. Instead of making their well-intentioned group members suffer--I grade appropriately."

Work with others as active participants was viewed by teachers as an overall goal for all aspects of the group activities. Usually these projects were assessed individually based on the member's part in the project so not to penalize anyone for other's work. Exceptions to this were group tests which required consensus by the group and sharing of the same grade.

Evaluation by student of the collaborative projects is accomplished through informal assessments by themselves and their group members. Teachers confirmed that they employed no formal means of assessment in the form of specific rubrics or scoring guides, relying instead on student comments and feedback from other classmates. One teacher summed up how most group work is evaluated: " To be honest, I think most are evaluated by grade for teachers and its too bad."

Overall, the responses indicated that while many teachers value group activities and are incorporating more of them into their classroom instruction, there are substantial misunderstandings and concerns over how to construct these projects, what aspects to emphasize, and how to evaluate them. Many teachers are still uncomfortable with the concept. As a result, they choose to view and assess group work only on an individual basis, while avoiding evaluating the group as a whole. Aware of this shortcoming, several teachers expressed a desire for assistance in this area.

In summary, teacher responses to the interview questions developed to address research questions two and three demonstrate that teachers hold distinctly different perspectives on speaking, listening, and group communication competencies. Teachers exhibited definite attitudes and approaches toward each competency area, and recognized different problems in incorporating activities to develop these skills into their classroom curricula.

The issues involved in developing speaking competencies were the most clearly defined and structured as indicated by the teachers' responses. Teachers understand the importance of developing speaking skills and its integration into the academic curriculum of the school district. Speeches were already built into classroom requirements at the various grade levels. These speeches begin at the lower high school grade levels with informational speeches--the type teachers agreed was the easiest, and progressed to the more difficult forms of persuasion and defending a position at higher grade levels, as students become more proficient. Assessment of these speeches is achieved predominately using some form of rubric or scoring guide which addresses elements of both organization and presentation skills. Additionally, teachers encouraged the use of good visual techniques in all of the activities where they would be appropriate, although they were not always graded along with the presentation. When visual aids were assessed, the grading was more informal and based predominately on appropriateness and effectiveness in relation to the presentation. Student self assessment was accomplished informally in a personal basis for both student and teacher. Student assessment of others

was achieved primarily through the use of simplified rubrics that served as feedback for the speaker and the teacher.

The development of listening competencies was confirmed to be most problematic for the majority of teachers as many acknowledged that students do poorly in this area. While most teachers attempted activities that required active listening from students, these activities often met with mixed results. Assessment of these activities was often achieved indirectly through grades on tests or assignments. Discussions, literature, and lectures were the predominate means (although not the only ones) through which teachers sought to encourage and develop student listening skills, with the ultimate goal of enabling students to make connections between the concepts and information they heard in class and the real world and their place in it. Assessment of these skills occurred mostly through teachers' personal observations and interpretations.

Finally, development of competency in group communication is an area in the process of development. Teachers revealed decidedly mixed opinions concerning this area of oral communication. A small percentage of the teachers either embraced the concept enthusiastically and incorporated a substantial amount of these types of activities in their classroom instruction or disliked the idea and avoided it completely in any of their students' assignments. The majority of the teachers interviewed were reticent and somewhat confused by what group projects might entail, particularly with regard to assessment. Many teachers remedied this lack of understanding by assigning specific tasks within the group and grading individually. By doing so, teachers could evaluate

each member's performance with individual rubrics. There were no formal scoring guides used to determine a grade relating to the group itself. The inequity of various group elements such as participation, responsibility and sharing ideas and workloads were concerns which lead teachers to develop these more individualistic approaches to group assessment. Student evaluations of themselves and other members of the group were accomplished through informal interaction and feedback among group members. Teacher evaluation was determined by individual student grade and personal observations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions and Interpretations

Nationwide developments within the past two decades in the area of educational standards and accountability motivated the present study. With the movement toward competency-based education, teachers recognize their growing accountability for facilitating competencies included in developing standards. This current trend toward academic accountability provides an opportunity for professionals in the discipline of Communication to apply their knowledge of effective oral communication practices to provide substantial benefits for elementary and secondary students and their teachers. A step toward facilitating accountability for educational outcomes in communication was the development and publication of the National Communication Association Standards and Competencies for K-12. This document furnishes sets of functional competencies in oral communication skills that afford a valuable guide to State and school district revisions of standards for academic instruction and evaluation in communication.

Comparison of Alaska State and Fairbanks North Star School District Standards with National Communication Association Standards

Research question one focused on the location of speaking, listening, and group communication competencies identified by the National Communication Association within State and local school district academic standards. The results reported here indicate that the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Ongoing Learner Goals are more limited, general statements that do not encompass the variety and detail

regarding specific speaking, listening, and group communication competencies found in the corresponding Alaska State Standards. The State Content Standards are somewhat more closely aligned with the standards developed by the National Communication Association. Furthermore, the study reveals that statements of required oral communication competencies in these three specific areas are contained for the most part in the English/language arts standards. However, closer examination reveals a considerable difference between the two sets of standards in scope and depth, with the National Communication Association competencies and standards containing more in-depth and complex requirements for skills in each of the corresponding communication areas, as well as the inclusion of many other communication areas (i.e. communication process, speech anxiety, interpersonal skills, and conflict management) not addressed in either the State or school district standards. While no state or district standards would be expected to meet all of the standards set by the National Communication Association, these differences suggest that future re-examination of the Alaska State Standards using the National Communication Association's standards as criteria both for evaluation and for development of oral communication standards would be beneficial to both teachers and students.

Teacher Interviews

Research questions two and three focused on how English/language arts teachers interpret, operationalize, and assess various components of the State oral communication competencies in the areas of speaking, listening, and group communication. The goals were to determine 1) what activities teachers utilize in their classroom to operationalize

the instruction of the skills denoted in the Alaska State Standards, and 2) how teachers assess these classroom speaking, listening, and group communication activities.

Speaking

Interview questions one and two focused on the organizational and presentational skills involved in speaking. Analysis revealed that speaking (in contrast to listening and group communication) was the area of oral communication most clearly and consistently defined and structured by teachers in the study. This occurrence was possibly because speaking skills are integrated across curricula in the District, with a variety of speeches expected at different grade levels. Examination of District documents revealed that lower grade levels focus on informational speeches before progressing to more difficult persuasive speeches at higher grade levels. All of the teachers noted classroom activities which involved speaking and all indicated they used some type of formal assessment rubric or scoring guide. These rubrics, while varying in scope and depth, included elements of both organization and presentation skills. Teacher comments suggested the potential benefit of drawing upon the Communication discipline's expertise in the development of a standardized rubric for assessment of the major organizational and presentational components of a speech. This standardized rubric could provide all teachers with a consistent format for assessment of class speeches. Additional clarification of the different types of speeches (informative, persuasive, entertainment...) could also be beneficial to teachers who possess less background in the area of communication.

Interview question three focused on three different types of speeches: 1) to inform, describe, and explain, 2) to entertain, and 3) to persuade and orally defend a position. The majority of teachers indicated they saw speaking skills as developmental in nature. They maintained that speeches to inform, describe, and explain are the easiest and most often employed in introducing speaking activities in the lower secondary grade levels (as well as with students who are less invested in their education) while persuasive speeches and oral defense of a position are more difficult and are used by teachers instructing at higher grade levels (and with students more vested in their education) as instruction in these types of speeches is more difficult. Responses to interview question three also revealed teachers' interpretation of "entertaining" as a speech type. Most teachers interpreted entertaining not as a type of speech (as indicated by the classical definition), but rather as an element of informational or persuasive speech. Teachers equated entertaining with keeping the audience's attention and being interesting. Further research is warranted in regard to the meaning of "entertaining" within the State standards. Clarification of this area would be of importance to both teachers and State educators to determine if "entertaining" should be revised in the State standards.

Interview question four addressed the effective and appropriate use of visual aids by students when involved in speaking activities. While all of the teachers in the study confirmed they encouraged students to use visual aids, there were mixed responses in regard to instruction and assessment of visual aids as a part of class activities. While some teachers spend time on instructing students on what are effective and appropriate visual aids, and many incorporate them into a substantial number of their student

presentations, other teachers expressed concern over assessing and assigning a grade for visual aids. These teachers would benefit from training by professionals in the Communication discipline regarding what constitutes an effective and appropriate visual aid. Additionally, every teacher could benefit from the availability of a standardized rubric for assessing such aids.

Evaluation of students' own speaking and that of others was the focus of interview question five. Teacher responses to this question indicated that, although teachers perceived the majority of student evaluation of self and others as informal, several teachers employed various types of activities that required students to formally assess one other's speaking abilities. Simple assessment rubrics were most often mentioned as the means for obtaining this formal feedback. Personal observations and conferences were noted as the primary means by which teachers determined how students perceived the development of their speaking abilities. Suggestions by members of the Communication discipline on the incorporating peer evaluation as a component of student speaking activities would be valuable to students learning about themselves as well as about others.

Listening

The results of this study are consistent with previous research which indicates that listening as the most overlooked communication skill, even though the majority of each person's day is spent in listening situations. Findings from interview question six indicated that while most teachers acknowledge the importance of listening skills to academic success, few engage students directly in activities to specifically promote

listening skills. Many teachers had not considered utilizing communication activities they currently employ for improving listening skills.

According to interview question seven responses, teachers agreed that discussions were the primary means through which they saw students obtaining oral information and experiences in the classroom. However, findings from this interview question also revealed this format to be somewhat problematic for classroom instruction, as most teachers indicated discussions must be developed over time and practice. Teachers confirmed they must supplement discussion with some lecture, even though they considered lecture to be a less effective format. Since the study involved examination of English/language arts teachers, literature (and discussions about literature) played a predominant role in classroom activities. Movies, art, and TV were used to a lesser extent in classroom instruction, whereas technical materials were seldom utilized at all.

In their responses to interview question eight, teachers identified the connections students make between what they hear in the class and their own lives and the outside world as the most important part of a student's total educational experience. Overall, teachers agreed that these overarching connections that students discover as a result of their classroom learning provide the opportunity for a significant awareness of themselves and their relationship to the world in general. Teachers concurred that these are the fundamental reasons for teaching literature and consequently, were acutely aware of the importance of the skills necessary to make these connections and their responsibility to teach them to their students. For the majority of teachers facilitating connections between what students hear and experience in the classroom and what they hear and experience in

their own lives in the world outside the classroom is the ultimate goal they strive for in teaching English/language arts. However, teachers also agree that this can be the most difficult task to accomplish, as many students prefer to just absorb information without attempting to do any critical thinking about the issues in these important areas.

Teacher observations and personal communication with students were the means by which teachers determined successful achievement of these connections. While teachers acknowledged that answers on tests and other related class work provided some formal measure of this concept, most argued the best assessment of these connections was evident in how student opinions were reflected in their work and in class. In this regard, English/language arts teachers appear to have a good understanding of what needs to be done in this area and appear to need little assistance from the Communication discipline, other than possible suggestions for additional activities which might aid in promoting these connections.

Group Communication

Examination of teacher perceptions on group communication revealed this area of oral communication to be in the developmental stage in most classrooms. While most teachers reported a variety of classroom activities which required students to perform in groups, other teachers admitted reluctance to incorporate any group activities into their classroom curricula. Whether they utilize many or few group activities, the majority of teachers interviewed consistently acknowledged they organized and assessed group activities on the basis of how the individual group member performed. Consequently,

there appeared to be substantial confusion among teachers as to what skills are involved in a group activity and, more importantly, how these skills should be assessed.

Aspects of collaborative activity such as responsibility for individual contributions, sharing ideas and workloads, incorporating individual talents and perspectives, and working effectively as an active group member were all considered by the teachers as the ideal goals for student achievement when participating in a group. Yet, teachers also admitted these goals are achieved by the teacher assignment and assessment of individual tasks for each group member. Responsibility for group success is thereby enforced by the teacher and removed from the group. Although group organization and assessment are simplified by these means, it is evident from the perspective of the Communication discipline that students are not being taught to work effectively as members of a group or team. Assistance in the form of providing a clearer understanding of the group process and its evaluation would be invaluable for most teachers. Suggestions for types of group activities, their organization, and assessment would be beneficial, since teachers indicated in the interviews that they were confused in regard to group activities and would appreciate help in these areas. Rubrics developed for peer evaluation could be beneficial for assessment of other group members, as well as the student's own participation.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that teachers have a good understanding of classroom activities for teaching and assessment of the skills involved in the area of speaking as an oral communication competency. However, teacher perceptions of listening and group communication as oral competencies indicate the need for

clarification of the skills associated with these concepts, as well as more effective and appropriate means of assessing them. Development of standardized rubrics more closely aligned with components suggested by professionals in the Communication discipline would provide a more uniform assessment. Assistance from the professionals in the Communication discipline would not only bring the State standards to closer alignment with the national standards, but would also aid teachers in bringing local District standards into alignment with the new State standards.

Recommendations

States and local school districts across the nation are currently developing and implementing new curriculum standards in response to the Federal government's challenge to improve student academic performance. Consequently, teachers are being held increasingly accountable for interpreting and developing classroom instruction that accurately reflects the goals of these new standards. This environment offers professionals in the Communication discipline a valuable opportunity to assist in the development of these new academic standards in the areas pertaining to communication. Based on this study, I would recommend that teachers and Communication professionals collaborate in re-examining the Alaska State Content Standards (and examining the Alaska State Performance Standards, when they become available) to determine areas that do (or do not) align with accepted professional Communication competencies and standards. This collaboration could potentially clarify any misinterpretations and misunderstandings by teachers, while providing a uniform foundation to guide the

direction of classroom instruction in communication areas such as speaking, listening, and group communication.

While standards in many areas of communication could benefit from assistance from Communication professionals, the standards examined in this study were limited to speaking, listening, and group communication. Since each area examined revealed distinctly different issues, recommendations will be organized according to the corresponding category.

Speaking

Speaking is the most clearly defined and incorporated by teachers in school curricula since a variety of speeches are already required in school district guidelines. District high school teachers presently use some type of assessment rubric. Additional recommendations include:

1. Clarification by Communication professionals of specific elements that comprise different types of speeches. The need for this clarification was evident in this research in the teachers' interpretation of what constitutes an "entertaining" speech. Teacher interpretations of this speech type were inconsistent with the professional Communication discipline's interpretation, requiring clarification of this particular speech type and its use in the Alaska State Content Standards.

2. While some type of rubric is currently used by teachers to assess speaking, this research suggests that a more systematic, uniform speaking rubric would be beneficial for high school teachers.

3. Based on this study, I would also recommend instruction for teachers by Communication professionals on effective and appropriate use of visual aids. A uniform rubric for assessing visual aids would also be beneficial.

4. Suggestions by Communication professionals for classroom activities to promote student self/peer evaluation would be helpful for teachers.

Listening

This study concurred with previous research findings that reveal listening as the most overlooked and under-evaluated communication skill, although it is an important fundamental skill. Few teachers in this study had considered structuring activities that specifically focus on developing or assessing these skills. Recommendations include:

1. Explanation and understanding of skills involved in listening by Communication professionals.

2. Activities for use in the classroom that would promote specific listening skills.

3. Uniform rubrics for these activities, designed to evaluate specific listening skills.

This study also indicated that teachers consider students' connection of what they hear in class to the outside world to be one of the most important functions of their education, although most teachers in the study found it to be the most difficult concept to attain.

4. Therefore, activities provided to teachers by Communication professionals to encourage and enhance students' critical thinking skills in this area would be helpful.

5. Uniform rubrics to assess these activities would also be of benefit to teachers.

Group Communication

Group communication was revealed to be a problematic area for teachers in this study. Few teachers indicated they constructed or assessed activities as a group, but preferred to create and grade individual tasks. Actual group components were minimized or ignored. Based on this research, I would recommend:

1. Instruction by Communication professionals on the actual "group" elements involved in creating and assessing group projects.
2. Suggestions for specific types of activities that promote elements of group work.
3. A uniform rubric that assesses different aspects of group communication.

Communication and cooperation between teachers and Communication professionals is essential to achieve educational standards and competencies in oral communication that are consistent with the goals of both groups. Together, these groups could provide students with skills that will prepare them for future success in academics and/or the workplace.

Limitations of the Study

Like most research, the present study has its limitations. First, random selection of the participants in the study was not completely successful. Although participants were initially randomized, attrition due to refusals and unwillingness to participate, as well as enthusiastic assistance found in one high school, turned the selection into one closer to a convenience sample, with one school furnishing seventy percent of the teachers interviewed. This specific population therefore limits the generalizations that can be made from these findings, as does the limitation to one school district. However, the findings

do present important initial insights into teachers' perceptions of how speaking, listening, and group communication skills identified in the Alaska State Content Standards are operationalized in the classroom. Additional research with a broader-based selection of participants, either in other school districts or across disciplines, could yield additional insights.

During one interview, a teacher had an unexpected interruption that required the interview to be cut short after only three interview questions. Since a compatible time to resume the interview could not be arranged, the participant (and the partial data already gathered) was dropped from the study, reducing the number of interview participants to ten. This elimination did not affect the basic findings for the research questions.

Also, it would have been preferable to have had two sets of interview questions which varied the order of the questions regarding the three oral communication competencies, or at least reversed the order in which the questions were asked with every interview. This suggestion stems from the discovery, after data collection, that the last five questions elicited fewer responses with briefer comments than the other questions. This result was possibly due to fatigue, since these questions were near the end of interview sessions which normally lasted almost an hour in length. A reduction in the number of questions or varying the order in which the questions were presented could determine if this is a valid concern.

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APPENDIX A

National Communication Association's Standards and Competencies for K-12
Fundamentals of Effective Communication

Standard 1
Competent communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationships among the components of the communication process.
Competent communicators ...
1-1 identify and describe the components of the communication process (speaker, listener, message, medium, feedback, and noise.
1-2 explain how the components of a communication model affect the communication process.
1-3 identify the relationship between nonverbal and verbal communication.
1-4 identify the sources of interference.
1-5 identify situational and social factors that influence communication.
1-6 explain how communication is a shared process between speaker and listener.
1-7 explain the role of feedback.
1-8 explain the difference between the oral and written communication process.
1-9 identify different purposes for communicating.
1-10 distinguish between different purposes for communicating.
1-11 use vocal qualities (pitch, tone, volume, etc.), words, and nonverbal cues to create and interpret meaning.
1-12 appreciate the dynamic and complex nature of the communication process.

Standard 2
Competent communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the influence of the individual, relationship, and situation on communication
Competent communicators ...
2-1 describe their shifting roles in a variety of communication interactions.
2-2 describe the influence of the individual on communication.
2-3describe the influence of relationships on communication.
2-4 describe the influence of context on communication.
2-5 analyze factors that influence communication choices.
2-6 select strategies appropriate to a communication situation.
2-7 use their experiences and knowledge to interpret messages.
2-8 use contextual factors to modify communication.
2-9 demonstrate ability to construct different messages that communicate the "same' meaning to different people.
2-10 monitor the communication behavior of self and others.
2-11 apply appropriate and effective communication strategies appropriate for the situation.

2-12 adapt communication behavior to changing situations.
2-13 use appropriate and effective communication strategies for a given context.
2-14 respect the diversity of communication strategies used by individuals.
2-15 accept responsibility to change communication strategies when communication is not appropriate or effective.

Standard 3
Competent communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the role of communication in the development and maintenance of personal relationships.
Competent communicators ...
3-1 describe the role of communication in relationships.
3-2 describe the factors influencing social interactions.
3-3 describe the role of self-concept in relationships.
3-4 describe the role of self-disclosure in relationships.
3-5 recognize the importance of diverse individual perceptions in interpersonal relationships.
3-6 describe the role of trust in relationships.
3-7 describe the role of conflict in relationships.
3-8 describe the role of constructive criticism in interpersonal relationships.
3-9 use social conventions to maintain conversation.
3-10 use language that contributes to positive relationships.
3-11 use communication strategies that avoid creating defensiveness.
3-12 use communication to enhance relationships.
3-13 use conflict management strategies in relationships.
3-14 offer constructive criticism.
3-15 respond to constructive criticism as a positive aspect of interpersonal communication.
3-16 appreciate the importance of communication in the development and maintenance of relationships.
3-17 show willingness to learn the social customs of other groups.
3-18 appreciate the possible positive impact of conflict on relationships.

Standard 4
Competent communicators demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the role of communication in creating meaning, influencing thought, and making decisions.
Competent communicators ...
4-1 recognize the power of language.
4-2 explain the difference between denotation and connotation.
4-3 explain the content and relational meanings of messages.
4-4 distinguish between facts and opinions.
4-5 recognize that inferences and assumptions are based on limited information.
4-6 interpreted the emotional meaning of a message.

4-7 recognize contradictions between verbal and nonverbal messages.
4-8 distinguish between stated and implied meanings of a message.
4-9 distinguish among different purposes of messages.
4-10 distinguish between literal and figurative meanings of messages.
4-11 explain how communication can lead to shared meaning.
4-12 explain how individual and social experiences affect the creation and understanding of messages.
4-13 explain how communication influences perception.
4-14 explain how conversations affect a communicator's views on specific issues.
4-15 recognize the role of communication in life situations (e.g., politics, advertising, and family).
4-16 use culturally sensitive language.
4-17 use language that is sensitive to individual differences.
4-18 respond appropriately and effectively to the emotional meanings of messages.
4-19 use alternate strategies when communication is inappropriate or ineffective.
4-20 show willingness to engage in communication to generate ideas.
4-21 appreciate how the same message may be interpreted differently by others.

Standard 5
Competent communicators demonstrate sensitivity to diversity when communicating.
Competent communicators...
5-1 explain the concepts of individual, social, and cultural diversity.
5-2 recognize the effects of diversity on communication.
5-3 identify strategies for analyzing audiences.
5-4 identify strategies appropriate for communicating with various audiences.
5-5 recognize divergent perspectives.
5-6 distinguish between supportive and unsupportive audiences.
5-7 select the most appropriate and effective medium for communicating.
5-8 organize messages so that most listeners can understand.
5-9 assess divergent perspectives.
5-10 use and create messages that are culturally inclusive.
5-11 use information about audience members to create and deliver messages.
5-12 use identified strategies to communicate in an appropriate and effective manner with an audience.
5-13 recognize and respond to cultural and social differences within an audience.
5-14 make adjustments during a presentation to promote understanding.
5-15 appreciate diversity in society and its effects on communication.
5-16 show willingness to communicate with others who have divergent opinions.
5-17 respect the diversity of opinions held by audience members.
5-18 accept responsibility for strategies used to communicate with an unsupportive audience.

Standard 6

Competent communicators demonstrate the ability to enhance relationships and resolve conflict using appropriate and effective communication strategies.

Competent communicators ...

6-1 determine when others do not understand.
6-2 identify language that may enhance relationships.
6-3 identify language that may lead to conflict.
6-4 distinguish between descriptive and evaluative language.
6-5 acknowledge effects of social and cultural diversity on conflict.
6-6 recognize socially acceptable standards for communication behavior.
6-7 describe various problem-solving strategies.
6-8 select relevant and adequate evidence to support arguments.
6-9 seek, offer, and respond to information to promote understanding.
6-10 use appropriate language to express conflicts in ways that enhance relationships.
6-11 use appropriate language to respond to other's feelings.
6-12 demonstrate ability to communicate to understand cultural and social differences.
6-13 collaborate to solve conflicts.
6-14 demonstrate use of appropriate and effective conflict management skills.
6-15 demonstrate open-minded and empathetic listening behaviors.
6-16 use a problem-solving sequence to make decisions.
6-17 demonstrate ability to build and maintain constructive relationships.
6-18 demonstrate ability to control their emotions when faced with negative criticism.
6-19 demonstrate assertiveness when appropriate.
6-20 demonstrate ability to use appropriate self-disclosure to enhance relationships.
6-21 demonstrate ability to encourage others when appropriate to disclose information.
6-22 demonstrate use of appropriate and effective negotiation skills.
6-23 appreciate the ways in which conflict can enhance relationships.
6-24 show willingness to solve conflicts in ways that enhance relationships
6-25 show willingness to find strategies to overcome social and cultural barriers.
6-26 appreciate the role of conflict resolution in maintaining relationships.
6-27 show willingness to engage in problem-solving strategies.
6-28 respect the divergent opinions of others.

Standard 7

Competent communicators demonstrate the ability to evaluate communication styles, strategies, and content based on their aesthetic and functional worth.

Competent communicators ...

7-1 define aesthetics.
7-2 define functions of communication (informing, influencing, relating, imagining, appreciating, ritualizing).
7-3 describe conversational styles.
7-4 identify criteria for selecting materials and texts for a given communication situation.

7-5 identify criteria (e.g., topic, context, goals) for evaluating the function and aesthetics of communication strategies.
7-6 select strategies to use in a given communication situation according to their functional and aesthetic worth.
7-8 apply criteria to evaluate events based on function.
7-9 adapt conversational styles to various contexts.
7-10 show willingness to apply a variety of criteria in evaluating an aesthetic event.
7-11 appreciate various conversational styles.
7-12 respect the creative expression of others.
7-13 respect the right of others to differ in their evaluation of an aesthetic event.

Standard 8
Competent communicators demonstrate the ability to show sensitivity to the ethical issues associated with communication in a democratic society.
Competent communicators ...
8-1 explain the importance of freedom of speech in a democratic society.
8-2 define ethical communication.
8-3 explain the importance of ethical communication.
8-4 recognize the role of ethics in communication.
8-5 select language that is respectful of others.
8-6 select inclusive language in addressing others.
8-7 select languages that clarifies rather than obscures.
8-8 recognizes their ethical responsibility to challenge harmful stereotypical or prejudicial communication.
8-9 select only information believed to be accurate.
8-10 analyze the effects of their communication choices on others.
8-11 apply ethical standards in all communication situations.
8-12 modify their own messages to remove stereotypical and prejudicial language.
8-13 compose messages that accurately reflect the original intent and content of the message.
8-14 interpret messages to accurately reflect the intent and content of the message.
8-15 interpret the behaviors of others without making stereotypical or prejudicial judgments.
8-16 interpret the accuracy and relevance of material to be quoted.
8-17 cite sources of evidence.
8-18 use qualifiers to indicate a lack of accuracy.
8-19 communicate in a manner that respects the rights of others.
8-20 appreciate the freedom to express diverse views in a democratic society.
8-21 show willingness to defend the freedom of speech of self and others.
8-22 accept responsibility for their own communication behaviors.
8-23 appreciate the importance of being open to the divergent views of others.
8-24 show willingness to see beyond stereotypes to seek individual worth.

8-25 appreciate the integrity and uniqueness of communication among diverse social and cultural groups.
8-26 advocate responsible communication.
8-27 show willingness to take a public stand on issues.
8-28 show willingness to challenge the unethical communication choices of others.

Speaking

Standard 9
Competent speakers demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the speaking process.
Competent speakers...
9-1 describe the components of the speaking process.
9-2 describe factors to consider when analyzing an audience (e.g., interests, age, etc.).
9-3 identify the criteria used to evaluate the qualities of appropriate and effective communication in a variety of contexts.
9-4 identify how communication context influences choice of communication strategies.
9-5 assess how feedback affects the speaker and the message.
9-6 use audience analysis to adapt a message and communication behaviors.
9-7 apply criteria to evaluate interpersonal, small group, and public communication.
9-8 use feedback to change communication and enhance interactions.
9-9 use feedback to alter communication goals.

Standard 10
Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to adapt communication strategies appropriately and effectively according to the needs of the situation and setting.
Competent speakers ...
10-1 identify strategies for appropriate and effective personal communication.
10-2 identify personal communication goals.
10-3 explain the importance of adapting communication to the situation and setting.
10-4 explain the role of self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships.
10-5 identify successful interviewing techniques.
10-6 identify strategies for appropriate and effective small group communication.
10-7 identifying problem-solving strategies.
10-8 identify group roles.
10-9 identify group norms.
10-10 identify strategies for appropriate and effective public communication.
10-11 organize a message appropriately and effectively.
10-12 develop an appropriate and effective introduction, body, and conclusion for a speech.
10-13 choose and narrow a speech topic for a specific occasion.

10-14 select appropriate and effective supporting material based on topic, audience, occasion, and purpose.
10-15 modify a message to fit the audience.
10-16 use verbal and nonverbal techniques to enhance a message.
10-17 adapt language to specific audiences and settings.
10-18 demonstrate successful interviewing techniques.
10-19 use communication strategies to achieve the major functions of a group.
10-20 demonstrate both task and social communicative behaviors in a small group.
10-21 participate appropriately and effectively in a problem-solving group discussion.
10-22 communicate and defend a point of view.
10-23 demonstrate ability to present an appropriate and effective introduction, body, and conclusion in a speech.
10-24 use credible sources for support.
10-25 use a method of delivery appropriate to the situation.
10-26 use feedback to improve future speeches.
10-27 appreciate language and cultural diversity.
10-28 appreciate receiving feedback from others.

Standard 11
Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to use language that clarifies, persuades, and/or inspires while respecting differences in listeners' backgrounds (race, ethnicity, age, etc.).
Competent speakers...
11-1 recognize that language use should be sensitive to listeners' backgrounds.
11-2 select language appropriate to the occasion, purpose, audience, and context.
11-3 describe how language clarifies meaning and organization.
11-4 evaluate the effect of articulation, pronunciation, and grammar on an audience.
11-5 use language that demonstrates sensitivity to cultural and individual differences.
11-6 adapt language use to the audience.
11-7 use humor and playful language appropriately.
11-8 communicate ideas clearly and concisely.
11-9 use vivid language that appeals to the senses.
11-10 use feedback to modify language choices.
11-11 appreciate the importance of respecting individual differences.
11-12 appreciate the power of language.

Standard 12
Competent speakers demonstrate the ability to manage or overcome communication anxiety.
Competent speakers ...
12-1 recognize that anxiety is a normal response to many communication situations.
12-2 describe physiological and psychological reactions to anxiety.

12-3 describe the individual and social factors that may lead to communication anxiety.
12-4 describe strategies to help minimize and/or manage communication anxiety.
12-5 demonstrate ability to appear confident while speaking.
12-6 use strategies that can alleviate communication anxiety.
12-7 participate in various communication situations previously avoided.
12-8 show tolerance for speakers who appear nervous.
12-9 show willingness to find ways to control communication anxiety.

Listening

Standard 13
Competent listeners demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the listening process.
Competent listeners...
13-1 identify the components of the listening process.
13-2 explain the relationship among the components of receiving, interpreting, and responding.
13-3 recognize the effects of seeing and hearing on listening.
13-4 distinguish between hearing and listening.
13-5 recognizes the effect of attention on listening.
13-6 describe the process of decoding messages.
13-7 recognize the effects of semantic variables on listening.
13-8 describe response styles.
13-9 explain the role of feedback in communication.
13-10 recognize the effects of context on listening.
13-11 recognize the effect of memory on listening.
13-12 recognize the influence of perspective on listening.
13-13 distinguish among communicators' perspectives.
13-14 recognize the shared responsibilities of speakers and listeners.
13-15 distinguish between passive and active listening.
13-16 identify listening purposes.
13-17 assess variations in speakers' and listeners' purposes for communicating.
13-18 assess differences in speakers' and listeners' meanings for words.
13-19 predict problems resulting from variations in speakers' and listeners' purposes for communicating.
13-20 demonstrate ability to focus attention on a speaker's message.
13-21 offer appropriate and effective feedback.
13-22 adapt listening behaviors to accommodate the listening situation.
13-23 practice appropriate and effective memory storage and retrieval strategies.
13-24 practice active listening.
13-25 appreciate the importance of listening.
13-26 show willingness to listen.
13-27 accept responsibility for focusing attention on a message.

13-29 advocate contexts conducive to appropriate and effective listening.
13-30 accept shared responsibility for successful communication.
13-31 accept responsibility for actively listening to a message.

Standard 14
Competent listeners demonstrate ability to use appropriate and effective listening skills for a given communication situation and setting.
Competent listeners ...
14-1 recognize the sequences of components involved in the listening process.
14-2 recognize various types and purposes of listening.
14-3 recognize skills unique to each listening type and purpose.
14-4 recognize the listener's role and responsibility in a communication situation.
14-5 select appropriate and effective listening responses across a variety of communication situations.
14-6 recognize responses to messages as evidence of engaging or having engaged in the listening process.
14-7 recognize silence as a form of communication.
14-8 distinguish among various reasons for a speaker's silence.
14-9 recognize that listening for appreciation is highly personal.
14-10 evaluate their own listening behavior.
14-11 adapt purposes for listening with the speaker's purpose for speaking.
14-12 apply skills appropriate to each type and purpose for listening.
14-13 use and respond to turn-taking signals during a communication interaction.
14-14 demonstrate attentiveness through verbal and nonverbal behaviors.
14-15 seek understanding of a message by engaging in questioning, perception-checking, summarizing, and paraphrasing.
14-16 practice empathic listening skills.
14-17 monitor their own listening behavior.
14-18 accept responsibility to improve comprehensive, critical, empathic, and appreciative listening skills.
14-19 show willingness to accept listening roles and responsibilities in various communication situations.
14-20 respect a speaker's right to choose to be silent.
14-21 respect the right of others to have opposing viewpoints.

Standard 15
Competent listeners demonstrate ability to identify and manage barriers to listening.
Competent listeners ...
15-1 recognize listening barriers in communication situations.
15-2 recognize the relationship between listening behaviors and self-esteem.
15-3 recognize the effects of bias on listening.
15-4 recognize the effects of close-mindedness on listening.

15-5 recognize the effects of preconceived attitudes on listening.
15-6 recognize the effects of indifference on listening.
15-7 recognize the effects of emotional involvement on listening.
15-8 recognize the effects of self-absorption on listening.
15-9 recognize the effects of impatience on listening.
15-10 recognize the effects of physical conditions on listening.
15-11 recognize the effects of mental state on listening.
15-12 recognize the effects of receiver apprehension on listening.
15-13 demonstrate ability to manage internal and external distractions.
15-14 accept responsibility for managing internal and external barriers to listening..
15-15 show willingness to validate others by listening to them.

APPENDIX B

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District High School
Ongoing Learner Goals for Ages 15 - 18
English/language arts

Composition

As writers, students will
- use steps in the writing process:
  - prewriting
  - drafting
  - response (including peer and teacher comments)
  - revision
  - editing for correctness (including grammar, agreement, punctuation, syntax, spelling, and usage)
  - final product
- use varied tools of electronic technology
- compose a variety of writings
  - personal
  - critical
  - technical

As writers, students will
- use portfolios as a means of assessment

As writers, students will
- compose a research paper including evidence of all steps of the writing process

As writers, students will
- compose personal responses to reflect understanding of self and others

Speaking / listening

As speakers and listeners, students will
- speak and listen appropriately in a variety of situations to a classroom-sized audience:
  - oral presentations
  - performances
- participate in an interview

As speakers and listeners, students will
- participate in a variety of group discussion formats including collaboration on projects

As speakers and listeners, students will
- speak and listen appropriately in a variety of situations to a classroom-sized audience

As speakers and listeners, students will

speak and listen in a variety of situations, respecting the communication styles of different cultures

Literature

As readers, students will

read a wide variety of literature including selections from the districtwide Common Core of Literacy Works

participate in group discussions responding to literature

As readers, students will

demonstrate individual responses and critical analysis

As readers, students will

read selected multicultural and gender-balanced genre (presenting a variety of perspectives on the human condition and promoting respect for the diversity of people and cultures in the world today)

- short stories
- poetry
- drama
- novels
- biography
- nonfiction
- autobiography
- essay

Critical Thinking

As critical thinkers, students will

interpret meaning:

- newspapers/magazines
- video/film/TV
- entertainment
- music
- Internet
- electronic
- advertisements
- print materials

As critical thinkers, students will

complete projects independently and collaboratively

As critical thinkers, students will

conduct research using a variety of resources and formal documentation

As critical thinkers, students will

evaluate content from the perspective of the author, speaker, or producer

recognize bias

Media Literacy

As viewers, students will

use the media in order to gather and synthesize information

understand the effects of media:

- consumerism
- stereotyping
- violence
- lifestyle choices

As viewers, students will

use media as a resource to create and communicate knowledge

APPENDIX C

Alaska Content Standards
English/ Language Arts

A. A student should be able to speak and write well for a variety of purposes and audiences.
A student who meets the content standard should:
1. apply elements of effective writing and speaking; these elements include ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and personal style.
2. in writing, demonstrate skills in sentence and paragraph structure, including grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
3. in speaking, demonstrate skills in volume, intonation, and clarity.
4. write and speak well to inform, to describe, to entertain, to persuade, and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication;
5. revise, edit, and publish the student's own writing as appropriate;
6. when appropriate, use visual techniques to communicate ideas; these techniques may include role playing, body language, mime, sign language, graphics, Braille, art, and dance;
7. communicate ideas using varied tools of electronic technology;
8. evaluate the student's own speaking and writing and that of others using high standards.

B. A student should be a competent and thoughtful reader, listener, and viewer of literature, technical materials, and a variety of other information.
A student who meets the content standard should:
1. comprehend meaning from written text and oral and visual information by applying a variety of reading, listening, and viewing strategies; these strategies include phonic, context, and vocabulary cues in reading, critical viewing, and active listening;
2. reflect on , analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral , written, and visual information and experiences, including discussions, lectures, art, movies, television, technical materials, and literature.
3. relate what the student views, reads, and hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to other texts and experiences.

C. A student should be able to identify and select from multiple strategies in order to complete projects independently and cooperatively.
A student who meets the content standards should:
1. make choices about a project after examining a range of possibilities;
2. organize a project by

a. understanding directions;
b. making and keeping deadlines; and
c. seeking, selecting, and using relevant resources;
3. select and use appropriate decision-making processes;
4. set high standards for project quality; and
5. when working on a collaborative project,
a. take responsibility for individual contributions to the project;
b. share ideas and workloads;
c. incorporate individual talents and perspectives;
d. work effectively with others as an active participant and as a responsive audience; and
e. evaluate the processes and work of self and others.

D. A student should be able to think logically and reflectively in order to present and explain positions based on relevant and reliable information.
A student who meets the content standard should:
1. develop a position by
a. reflecting on personal experiences, prior knowledge, and new information;
b. formulating and refining questions;
c. identifying a variety of pertinent sources of information;
d. analyzing and synthesizing information; and
e. determining an author's purposes;
2. evaluate the validity, reliability, and quality of information read, heard, and seen;
3. give credit and cite references as appropriate; and
4. explain and defend a position orally, in writing, and with visual aids as appropriate.

E. A student should understand and respect the perspectives of others in order to communicate effectively.
A student who meets the content standard should:
1. use information, both oral and written, and literature of many types and cultures to understand self and others
2. evaluate content from the speaker's or author's perspective;
3. recognize bias in all forms of communication; and
4. recognize the communication styles of different cultures and their possible effects on others.

APPENDIX D

Alaska State Performance Standards

Reading

Ages 15-18

Students know and are able to do everything required at earlier ages and:

1. apply knowledge of syntax, roots, and word origin, and use context clues and reference materials, to determine the meaning of new words and to comprehend text.
2. summarize information or ideas from text and make connections between summarized information or sets of ideas and related topics or information.
3. a. identify and assess the validity, accuracy, and adequacy of evidence that supports the author's main ideas.
   b. critique the power , logic, reasonableness, and audience appeal of arguments advanced in public documents.
4. read and follow multi-step directions to complete complex tasks.
5. analyze the rules(conventions) of the four genres of fiction (short story, drama, novel, and poetry) and the techniques used in these genres, and evaluate the effects of these conventions and techniques on the audience.
6. analyze and evaluate how authors use narrative elements and tone in fiction for specific purposes.
7. Express and support assertions, with evidence from the text or experience, about the effectiveness of a text
8. analyze and evaluate themes across a variety of texts, using textual and experiential evidence.
9. analyze the effects of cultural and historical influences on the texts.

Writing

Ages 15-18

Students know and are able to do everything required at earlier age as and:

1. write a coherent composition with a thesis statement that is supported with evidence, well-developed paragraphs, transitions, and a conclusion.
2. demonstrate understanding of elements of discourse (purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing expressive (creative, narrative, descriptive), persuasive, research-based, informational, or analytical writing assignments.
3. use the conventions of standard English independently and consistently including grammar, sentence structure, paragraph structure, punctuation, spelling, and usage.
4. revise writing to improve style, word choice, sentence , variety, and subtlety of meaning in relation to the purpose and the audience.
5. cite sources of information using a standard method of documentation.

Mathematics

Ages 15-18

Students know and are able to do everything required at earlier ages and:

Numeration

1. read, write, model, order, and define real numbers and subsets.
2. add in a different base system
3. compare and contrast the relationship between various applications of the same operation.
4.translate between equivalent representations of the same exponential expression.
5. recognize, describe, and use properties of the real number system.

Measurement

1. evaluate measurements for accuracy, precision, and error with respect to the measuring tools, methods, and the computational process.
2. estimate and convert measurements between different systems.
3. apply various measurement systems to describe situations and solve problems.
4. use indirect methods, including the Pythagorean Theorem and right triangle trigonometry, to find missing dimensions.

Estimation and Computation

1. use estimation to solve problems and to check on the accuracy of solutions; state whether the estimation is greater or less than the exact answer.
2. add and subtract real numbers using scientific notation, powers, and roots.
3. multiply and divide real numbers in various forms including scientific notation, powers, and roots.
4. select, convert, and apply an equivalent representation of a number for a specified situation.
5. use ratios and proportions to model and solve fraction and percent problems with variable.

Functions and Relationships

1. identify, graph, and describe the graphs of basic families of functions including linear, absolute value, quadratic, and exponential using a graphing calculator.
2. create and solve linear and quadratic equations and inequalities.
3. create and solve simple systems of equations, algebraically and graphically, using a graphing calculator.
4. use discrete structures, such as networks, matrices, sequences, and iterations as tools to analyze patterns, expressions, and equations
5. add, subtract, multiply, divide, and simplify rational expressions; add, subtract, and multiply polynomials.

Geometry

1. identify and use the properties of polygons, including interior and exterior angles, and circles (including angles, arcs, chord, secants, and tangents) to solve problems.
2. create 2-dimensional representations of 3-dimensional objects.

3. identify congruent and similar figures using Euclidean and coordinate geometries; apply this information to solve problems.
4. use transformations to demonstrate geometric properties.
5. use coordinate geometry to graph linear equations, determine slopes of lines, identify parallel and perpendicular lines, and to find possible solutions for sets of equations.
6. construct geometric models, transformations, and scale drawings using a variety of methods including paper folding, compass, straight edge, protractor, and technology.
Statistics/ Probability
1. analyze and draw inferences from a wide variety of data sources that summarize data; constructing graphical displays with and without technology.
2. determine the line of best fit and use it to predict unknown data values.
3. describe data, selecting measures of the central tendencies and distribution, to convey information in data.
4. analyze the validity of statistical conclusions and the use, misuse, and abuse of data caused by a wide variety of factors including choices of scale, inappropriate choices of measures of center, incorrect curve fitting, and inappropriate uses of controls or sample groups.
5. analyze data from multiple events and predict theoretical probability; find and compare experimental and theoretical probability for a simple situation, discussing possible differences between the two results.
6. design, conduct, analyze, and communicate the results of multi-stage probability experiments.
Problem-solving
1. recognize and formulate mathematical problems from within and outside the field of mathematics.
2. apply multi-step, integrated, mathematical problem-solving strategies, persisting until a solution is found or it is clear no solution exists.
3. verify the answer by using an alternative strategy.
Communication
1. use appropriate technology to represent the information and ideas in a problem.
2. use numerical, graphic, and symbolic representations to support oral and written communication about math ideas.
3. explain, justify, and defend mathematical ideas, solutions, and methods to various audiences.
Reasoning
1. follow and evaluate an argument, judging its validity using inductive or deductive reasoning and logic.
2. make and test conjectures.
3. use methods of proofs including direct, indirect, and counterexamples, to validate conjectures.
Connections
1. apply mathematical skills and processes to global issues.

2. describe how mathematics can be used in knowing how to prepare for careers

APPENDIX E

Teacher Consent Form

Dear _____:

I would like to ask you to participate in this study of selected teachers in Fairbanks North Star Borough School District High Schools to determine the place of classroom activities in the development of certain oral communication skills. In addition to writing skills, the Alaska State Content and Performance Standards for English/language arts contain segments that address the development oral communication skills in such areas as public speaking, listening, and group communication. A determination of classroom activities and techniques teachers use to facilitate the learning of these skills (as well as how they assess them) would provide important information for district educators' use in preparing classroom curricula relevant to these standards. Your input as an English/language arts teacher would be of great value to this study.

The study will consist of approximately thirty minutes of interview questions concerned with type and frequency of classroom activities relating to communication skills in the areas of public speaking, listening, and group communication. The time and place of the interview will be arranged for your convenience. The Fairbanks North Star School District, the University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB, and your principal have already

been contacted for their agreement. Your participation will be completely voluntary at all times and you may terminate your participate at any point in the study. Data will be kept in strict confidence with confidentiality issues maintaining a high priority. Individual names and/or schools will not be identified, as only type, frequency of activities, and assessment of the classroom oral communication activities will be reported for the analysis. A copy of the final report will be available upon request. You may contact me at 488-2937 at anytime if you have questions and/or concerns. Your signature will indicate your understanding and consent. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Dianne B. Barnett

I have read the above, understand, and consent to participate in the study.

_____

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide for Teachers

PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

1. According to Alaska Content Standard A for English/ Language Arts a student should be able to apply elements of effective speaking: including organization of ideas and vocabulary.

Q1. Describe activities you use in the classroom that require students to apply elements of effective speaking .

How do you assess student abilities regarding these elements?

2. Standard A also states that a student should, in speaking: demonstrate skills in volume , intonation, and clarity.

Q2. Describe classroom activities you use that require students to demonstrate these as well as other presentational speaking skills (ex. volume, rate, intonation, clarity, etc.).

How do you assess these speaking skills when evaluating student activities?

3. Standard A states that a student should speak well:
1. to inform, to describe, and to explain
2. to entertain
3. to persuade and orally defend a position
in a variety of formats.

Q3. Which two of these purposes for speaking do you consider most important for

inclusion in classroom activities? In what type of activities do you incorporate them?

How do you assess the two purposes you consider most important?

4. Alaska State Content Standards A and D both address the fact that a student should, when appropriate, use effective visual techniques to communicate.

Q4. In what ways do you encourage students to effectively and appropriately use visual techniques in their class activities?

How do assess effectiveness in using visual techniques in class activities?

5. Alaska Content Standard A also states that a student should evaluate their own speaking ... and that of others, using high standards.

Q5. In the classroom, how do students evaluate their own speaking?

How do they evaluate the speaking of others?

How do you assess these student evaluations of their own speaking? of others?

LISTENING SKILLS

6. The Alaska Content Standard B states that a student should comprehend meaning from ... oral information ... by applying a variety of listening strategies; ... including active listening.

Q6. What types of activities in your classroom involve students in active listening?

How do you assess student use of active listening in these activities?

7. Standard B also states that a student should reflect on, analyze, and evaluate a variety of oral information and experiences, including:

1. discussions **4. movies** **7. literature**
2. lectures **5. TV**

3. art **6. technical materials**

Q7. Which two of these formats do you consider most important in your classroom for student focus in reflecting on, analyzing, or evaluating oral information?

How do you assess student reflection, analysis, or evaluation of these two formats?

8. Standard B also states a student should relate what the student hears to practical purposes in the student's own life, to the world outside, and to other texts and experiences.

Q8. In what ways do students relate what they hear in your classroom to practical purposes in their lives, the world, and other experiences?

How do you assess the activities in which students make these connections?

GROUP COMMUNICATION

9. Alaska Content Standard C states when working on a collaborative project, a student should:

a. take responsibility for individual contributions to the project
b. share ideas and workloads,
c. incorporate individual talents and perspectives,
d. work effectively with others as an active participant,
e. evaluate the processes and work of self and others.

Q9. What type of collaborative projects do you require in your class?

How are these projects assessed?

Q10. In what ways do these collaborative projects encourage students to take responsibility for their individual contributions to the projects?

How do you assess this aspect of the group project?

Q11. In what ways do these collaborative projects encourage students to share ideas and workloads when working on a group project?

How do you assess this aspect of the project?

Q12. In what ways do these collaborative projects encourage students to incorporate their individual talents and perspectives when working collaboratively?

How do you assess this aspect?

Q13. In what ways do collaborative projects facilitate students to work with others as active participants?

How do you assess this aspect of group work?

Q14. In what ways do students evaluate their own processes and work in collaborative activities?

How do they evaluate the work of others?

Describe ways in which you assess their evaluations of self and others.